

Labour Monthly

EDITED BY R. PALME DUTT

ONE YEAR OF WAR

SEPTEMBER 1940 SIXPENCE

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LABOUR MONTHLY

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Notes of the Month

One Year of War—The Balance-Sheet—1914-15 and 1939-40—The Battle of the British Empire—World Conflict—War Aims—Questions Without Answers—The Evolution of Mr. Attlee—Molotov and “The Times”—“The Times” and Mr. Podsnap—European Peoples and Colonial Peoples—Which Way to European Unity?—Devastation of World Economy—The War and the Labour Movement—The Lesson of France—“Stab in the Back” Myth—Britain and France—“War Socialism” Exploded—Disillusioned Prophets—Political Situation in Britain—Chartism and Today—The People’s Convention

ONE year of war. Every continent of the Western Hemisphere, Europe, Africa and Asia, is now engaged in war; and the interval before the dragging in of the Eastern Hemisphere, of America, is already becoming visibly narrow. A year ago, at the outset of the present war, in the first issue of this journal after its outbreak, we noted that this was not yet a world war; the action of the Soviet Union had limited its scope, and had thus won a last opportunity, in a way that did not exist at the outset of the first world war, for the working people to stifle it and bring it to a close before it had reached its full scope; but that if this chance were not taken, then it would inevitably extend to world war on a scale far more terrible and with even more far-reaching consequences than the first world war. This path has now been trodden; the advocates of the extension of the war have had their way. The war is now very close to world war; from the more limited inception the rate of development has been very much more rapid than in the first world war. Only the socialist world remains genuinely outside and neutral, holding in its protection two hundred millions of people, one-tenth of mankind, the representatives and guardians of the future, of all human values in the midst of barbarism and reaction. The struggle that opens is more severe: the extension of the war brings great dangers and hardships to all people; but it brings also great opportunities to courageous mass leadership in the midst of the crumbling of the old sick society. More than ever we need to make true today the words of the Basel resolution three decades ago of the old Socialist International: “*The proletariat is conscious of being at this moment the bearer of the entire future of mankind. The proletariat will exert all its energy to prevent the annihilation of the flower of all peoples, threatened by all the horrors of mass murder, starvation and pestilence.*”

ONE year of war. What is the balance sheet? All the contestants are engaged in feverishly counting up their gains and losses, their relative strength for the final decisive conflict that now opens. The outcome of this year makes no glorious record for capitalist civilisation. The mounting lists of dead and wounded; the disorganisation of economy; all science, technique

and labour turned to the reckless output of engines of destruction; the shadow of famine over Europe; nations enslaved; the destruction of popular liberties; the enthronement of corruption, profiteering and reaction; the subjection of the labour movement; these are the fruits of one year of war. The capitalist rulers of the world have "solved" the economic crisis which was beginning to gather from 1937, and was threatening to be more extensive and disastrous than the crisis of 1929, only by the expedient of a general blood-letting and devastation which has let loose a more terrible and deep mortal crisis of their whole system. Of the Governments which launched the war, in the one camp the Polish Government is already indicted and condemned, not only by the Polish people, but even by its refugee successors from among the old corrupt ruling class; the French Government is under trial by its own reactionary successors; the Entente is in ruins; in Britain the Chamberlain Government has fallen and had to give way to the reconstructed Churchill-Chamberlain-Bevin Government, which in turn begins to be shaken before the rising mass discontent. In the other camp, despite the military successes which have subjected ninety millions of people (still only a fraction of those subject to the British Empire), Hitler-Fascism has entered on the path of its undoing: having first come forward and even won support as the supposed champion against the dictate of Versailles, it has now advanced with the dictate of Compiègne on the same path of imperialist conquest and domination and has thereby fostered the avenging forces, already strong within its own territory, and now reinforced by the struggles of national liberation leading to its future downfall. Only Communism, only the Socialist Soviet Union and the Communist Parties, have gained in real and lasting strength in this first year of war, to a degree for which there could be no parallel in the first year of the first world war. This is manifest, not only in the relative international position of the Soviet Union, and in the situation in the countries bordering the Soviet Union, but also in France, in Germany, and in the present first stage of gathering political crisis in Britain.

IT is inevitable that comparisons will be made between the first year of the war of 1914 and the first year of the present war. The contrast is marked. The conclusion of the first year of the war of 1914 had already settled down to the war of position from which it did not emerge for three years, and then only consequent on social-political factors of disintegration which ended the military deadlock. The scale of casualties, of mass slaughter, of that first year was far heavier; the military and political outcome far less. The effective forces of the contestants were then more evenly matched at the outset. British and French imperialism were not only at a less advanced stage of inner decomposition, but had built up for a preceding decade their combination with Russian Tsarism; they had not yet reached the dilemmas of the modern period in which their class antipathies led them to abandon their traditional system of balance and finally brought them to launch war in isolation against German imperialism, after first building up its strength. The scale and rate of political-military events, of collapse of states, of sudden far-reaching transformations and sharp turns, is far more rapid in this war. This markedly different character is a reflection of the advanced stage of the general crisis of capitalism within which this war takes place. In the last war the weaker, internally crumbling Empires, with a still considerable feudal admixture,

which broke up under the stress of war, were successively the Russian, the Austro-Hungarian, and finally the German junker-industrialist Empire; though in the last case the basic monopoly-capitalist structure remained intact and was able to rebuild its system in a new form, first through the Weimar Republic and finally through Fascism. In this war the older, internally weakening Empires are the British and French; while German imperialism, though rent with extreme class antagonism to the point of veiled civil war, represents at the same time the newest most advanced state-capitalist organisation of monopoly capital, and is the advancing claimant to colonies, not yet the possessor. The French Empire has already gone down in the first year of war; and the battle develops over its inheritance. All the challenging forces of imperialism now direct their attack against the British Empire, calculate openly on its demise and struggle over the inheritance.

THE new stage of the war, following on the collapse of France, is thus characterised by the converging attack on the British Empire by the challenging imperialist forces from every point of the compass and in every corner of the globe; while the British Empire, still confident in its strength, gathers its forces to repel the assault and deliver its counter-offensive equally on a world scale. In this conflict the British Empire calculates on the support of the United States (for the reasons analysed in our July issue), even at the same time as the United States stakes its claim for the reversion of the colonies in the Eastern hemispheres. British imperialism, utilising its weapon of naval supremacy, extends its blockade of Europe to a system of world-trade control. German imperialism, having established its domination on the Continent of Western and Central Europe, and having offered, and been refused, peace on the basis of recognition of this domination, together with colonial and naval concessions, is now in a position to advance to the world offensive against the British Empire: first, from its bases on the Western European coasts, to strengthen its counter-blockade and attack the nerve-centres of the Empire by an enlarging aerial offensive; second, to feel its way towards the advance along the old route to the Near and Middle East; third, to utilise its Spanish ally for the attack on Gibraltar to close the Mediterranean from that end; and fourth, to utilise its Italian ally for the attack on Suez, Egypt, Aden and British power in Africa leading, in the one direction, to South Africa, with the strong pro-Nazi forces there established and, in the other direction, again to the vital strategic centres of the Middle East. Japanese imperialism, associated with the Axis, but acting independently, presses its offensive in the Far East; encouraged, but not appeased, by the surrender of the Burma Road, forces the withdrawal of troops from Central China, threatens Hong Kong, presses towards Indo-China, demands the complete withdrawal of Britain from the Far East, and begins to advance its claims to the Dutch East Indies. At the same time the United States, while fomenting the European conflict and sending military support to Britain, by the Havana decisions ("the greatest victory since 1776", i.e., since the victorious War of Independence against Britain, in the words of the Columbia Broadcasting Corporation) advances the first form of its claim, under the guise of American "collective trusteeship", to the colonies in and adjoining the American Continent.

As the full world compass of the present conflict thus comes physically and geographically into view in the present phase, with the spheres of operations extending thousands of miles apart over different continents, and revealing the European battle as only the starting point and metropolitan centre; as Askaris and Somalis are set fighting one another for the privilege of being dominated and exploited by one or another set of white rulers; as former allies and comrades-in-arms are, in a twinkling, on the word of command of their Governments, engaged in blowing one another to pieces; as the armies mass on the borders of Syria, in Egypt, Palestine and Trans-jordan; as the fate of the Dutch East Indies, of Indo-China or of Guiana and the West Indies comes onto the auction table: so, inevitably, the real character of the war begins to become manifest to the most credulous and the least observant, in its relentless, realistic outlines, as a conflict of imperialist Powers for the domination of the world. This plain reality still sticks in the gullet of the liberal ideologues whose fading phantasies accompany the progress of the war, until the time comes for them to bewail their disillusionment after they have served their purpose. But facts tell.

It is characteristic of the present phase that, in the midst of the sharpness of the struggle and the dangers confronting the peoples, the question begins to be sounded anew: For what are we fighting? After the example of France, and with the similar blows against democracy gathering force in Britain, the original slogans begin to lose their force. ("The dividing line in Europe is not, as has been sometimes absurdly suggested, between democratic and non-democratic states".—Lord Lloyd, "The British Case," with Introduction by Lord Halifax.) The demand begins to be voiced anew, in the liberal-labour press, for a definition of war aims, and to be met with the old refusal and evasions from the Government. This demand for a definition of war aims is, in fact, the reflection of the uneasy consciousness of the liberal ideologues that the imperialist realities are burning through their idealistic myths. As the *Daily Herald* naively declared, in castigating the Government for its refusal to give any definition of war aims other than victory:

That attitude will not do. It will not eradicate the suspicion, still active in the minds of many foreign onlookers, that the only true reason for our declaring war was to preserve our imperialistic monopolies. (*Daily Herald*, August 12, 1940.)

AFTER a year of war, after a year of propaganda for the glorious aims of the war, the official apologist of the Labour Party, Harold Laski, wishes to know what the war is for:

We want full knowledge, and in concrete terms, of our war aims. It is not enough, after almost a year of war, to be told that our aim is victory. Victory for what?

(Harold Laski, "Trust the People", in the *Daily Herald*, August 8.)

After a year of war, after a year of no less ecstatic propaganda, the official Labour Party organ finds that there is no "clear idea of what we are fighting for":

We have been at war for nearly a year. By now the world should have a pretty clear idea of what we are fighting for. But has it? It has not.

(*Daily Herald* Editorial, August 12.)

Recalling the famous Labour Declaration of Peace Aims of last February,

which was hawked round a hundred Labour Conferences over the country to confuse and rally hesitant Labour workers into support of imperialism, the *Daily Herald* now, belatedly, discovers that this document (the prospectus on the basis of which the war was “sold” to the Labour movement) has no binding value whatever for the ruling class, which holds the power, and whose organ is the Conservative Party:

No such definition of war and peace aims has ever come from the leaders of the Conservative Party. (*Ibid.*)

Quite so. The class which rules determines the war aims, and the war aims of the imperialists can only be imperialist. To refuse to face this simple fact is wilful self-deception. But it would have been better to have recognised it at the time of the Labour Conferences.

THE same Labour Party leaders who produced the document in February have now united with the leaders of the Conservative Party in a single Government controlled by the Conservative Party, by the representatives of finance-capital. Therefore, they have now to become the official apologists of the Government policy of refusing a definition of war aims. The following parliamentary comedy accordingly takes place, performed by the same Attlee in August who, in February, proclaimed Labour’s War Aims:

Mr. Sloan asked the Prime Minister whether he was prepared, at an early date, to make a statement of the peace aims of the Government.

Mr. Attlee: The importance of my hon. friend’s question is not underestimated. Members of the Government have on previous occasions stated our aims, and these will be elaborated at the appropriate time.

Mr. Bartlett asked if the right hon. gentleman would define the phrase “an appropriate time”.

Mr. Attlee: I do not think it is possible to define “an appropriate time” beyond saying that “an appropriate time” is a time that is appropriate (laughter).

Like Nero’s fiddle, the “laughter” of Parliament accompanies the conflagration of civilisation. The “laughter” of Parliament is the answer of the ruling class to those who are innocent enough to ask for what they are required to fight.

WHEN Molotov, in his blunt fashion, defined the war aims of British imperialism—about which its official representatives prefer to be decently reticent—in reference to the refusal of the British Government to discuss peace terms, following Hitler’s official proposal of July 19:

This means that the British Government does not wish to give up the colonies which Britain possesses in every part of the world, that it is prepared to continue the war for world supremacy.

(Molotov, speech to the Supreme Soviet, August 1, 1940.)

The Times was hurt at such a coarse presentation of the idealistic aims of the British imperialists:

At one or two points he misinterpreted the British war aims and the reasons for the British determination to win. He declared that the British Government are “prepared to continue the war for world supremacy”. In fact, the British Government and the British people are prepared to continue the war against world supremacy, against the German attempt to make all other peoples subservient.

(*The Times*, August 2.)

THE sublime unconsciousness of this comment could only be achieved by the training of generations of Podsnappery. That the British Empire should hold one quarter of the earth's surface and one quarter of the earth's population is, obviously, in the natural order of things and by no means a claim to "world supremacy". But this upstart Hitler has already conquered and annexed some ninety millions of human beings. The British Empire has conquered and annexed some four hundred and fifty millions. Hitler holds ninety millions in subjection. The British Empire holds four hundred and fifty millions in subjection. Is it not obvious to every right-thinking person that the British Empire, in combating Hitler's expansion, is manfully combating, not "for world supremacy", but "against world supremacy, against the German attempt to make all other peoples subservient"? Such is the "reasoning" of the British imperialists. Indeed, they have become so unconscious of the trifling detail of their own Empire, that they have begun to picture themselves, for public view, as a heroic little nation battling alone against a vast imperialistic octopus—"You must not expect immediate miracles all over the world from a nation which numbers only 45,000,000 souls, a third of your own size." (Lord Lothian, British Ambassador to the United States, speaking at the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce, April 19, 1940.)

FEARLESSLY pursuing its argument with Molotov, *The Times* even ventures to enter the dark region of the question of colonies:

Twice during his speech M. Molotov seemed to suggest that the only reason for continuing the war was "the question of the redistribution of colonies". That question is only one of many. During the years when the British Government were working for peace they set no limits to the scope of general talks with a Germany genuinely desiring peace. The British people fought only when they saw that Germany's ambitions included not merely colonies, but the domination of Europe. The unconsciousness here is no less sublime. The domination of hundreds and hundreds of millions of non-European peoples in colonial subjection appears only right and proper: these are spoils over the distribution of which a deal might be made under suitable conditions, provided that German imperialism were prepared to be reasonably subservient in other respects (against the Soviet Union), and on this basis to receive such colonial crumbs as might be granted instead of claiming the main spoils. But the domination of some scores of millions of European peoples—this is an outrage which can only be met by war. The British imperialists thus present themselves as fighting against "the domination of Europe" by Germany. But this question also merits further definition.

THE unification of Europe is historically necessary and inevitable. Such unification can only be combined with national equality and freedom on the basis of socialism, on the same principles as are already realised in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and further exemplified in the voluntary adhesion of the Baltic peoples. Within imperialism this unification can only take place on the basis of the domination of one or another imperialist Power. The actual question posed by the present situation is: *under which Power?* British imperialism is certainly determined to prevent the unification of Europe under the domination of Germany: for this would provide the decisive basis for the challenge of German imperialism to win world power

against the existing world power of British imperialism. But the British imperialists are equally certain that they are themselves destined to be the leaders of Europe. This aim of domination and veiled annexation found expression in the conception of "Federal Union", which underwent a shipwreck with the fall of France. But the aim has not been abandoned. Within four days of its repudiation of Germany's ambition to dominate Europe, the same *Times* was declaring:

Great Britain . . . will become the natural leader in the reconstruction of Europe.
(*The Times*, August 6.)

The counter-revolutionary character of such projected "reconstruction" and domination is sufficiently indicated by the counter-revolutionary anti-popular character of the puppet "Governments" and claimants now held in reserve in London for half the countries of Europe. *The issue of the "domination of Europe" is also only an aspect of the basic world imperialist conflict.*

THIS conflict is ravaging world economy with far greater intensity and devastating range than the first world war. When the war of 1914 broke out, capitalism had not yet reached the stage of a general world economic crisis, a suffocating surplus of all primary materials and manufactured goods, and wholesale policies of direct destruction and limitation of production. But the war of 1939 supervened on such a sick capitalism, and by the blocking of the channels of exchange between Europe and the other continents has brought ruinous conditions to all countries.

The buy-and-burn policy spreads. A few days ago it became known that West Africa was to burn cocoa. Her European markets, except the British one, have gone. In South America many industries are running into the worst slump of all time. This is a result of the loss of markets. In Brazil, coffee farmers are to give up 25 per cent of their crops to be burned. . . . The policy of burning also spreads to the Argentine. . . .

There is, of course, danger for the future in this situation. Whereas, in the last war, there was a vast extension of acreage in foreign countries used for the production of foodstuffs, it is likely that, on this occasion, the absence of buyers will result in a reduction of acreage. Indeed, the time may come when the inability of nations to exchange goods with each other will bring about conditions of world famine.

(*Evening Standard*, June 4, 1940.)

The world conflagration is no metaphor; its fires light up the skies of five continents, as the means of life are being annihilated. Such are some of the fruits of the first twelve months of the "war for civilisation".

WHAT is the effect for the labour movement after one year of alignment with imperialism in this conflict? The effects in France have already reached classic completeness with the annihilation of democracy and the old forms of the labour movement; only the Communist Party carries on the struggle. The contrast between the heights of four years ago when Communism led the labour movement, and the fascists were in retreat, and the outcome within twelve months of the policy of "national unity" with fascism, abandonment of the class struggle and suppression of the militant workers, teaches a profound lesson for all countries, and not least for Britain. The sponsors of the policy which has led to this disastrous outcome seek now to shuffle the cards in order to cover up their responsibility, to confuse the in-

ternal and external factors, and to attribute the destruction of democracy to the military defeat, in order to draw therefrom suitable chauvinist lessons for the renewal of the policy of "national unity". On the contrary. *Not the military defeat led to the destruction of democracy, but the destruction of democracy led to the military defeat.* The disruption of French trade unionism twelve months ago by the "socialists" in alliance with fascism, the imprisonment and expulsion of the militant workers, is only completed by the dissolution of the Confederation of Labour to-day: of the two Assistant Secretaries placed in office, on unification, to represent the two trends and to guard the independence and unity of French trade unionism, the one, the Communist, is in the concentration camp (placed there, not by Hitler, but by the "socialists"), while the other, the reformist, the ally and partner of Transport House, completes his course as a Minister of the Fascist Government of Pétain over the ruins of the trade union movement. Since the days of the coming to power of Hitler, there has not been so mercilessly complete a demonstration of the two trends in the labour movement and their outcome.

TO-DAY, the apologists of Transport House, the Labour Party propagandists, the Laskis, Gollanczes, Stracheys and their company, faced with the outcome of their policy in France, seek to cast the blame, not on the "socialists", the Blums and Jouhaux, who allied themselves with fascism and imprisoned the Communists and militant workers, but on the imprisoned Communists and militant workers. Not the workers' leaders who sat in a Cabinet with the fascist gangsters, who suppressed democracy and disrupted the working-class organisations, introducing the death sentence for revolutionary Marxism, were responsible: on the contrary, the imprisoned workers' leaders, who remained true to the working-class struggle, the Communist deputies, unseated, deprived of their parliamentary rights, gagged, tried in secret and thrown into prison, the thousands of militant workers cast into the concentration camps, were responsible according to these precious theorists, for the disasters of the French people.

THIS is the familiar theory of the fascists, the theory of the "stab in the back" by the militant working class. So Hitler and Ludendorff "explained" a thousand times over the German military defeat of 1918, not as the consequence of the inner rottenness, decomposition and anti-popular reaction of the German régime, but as the consequence of the struggle of the revolutionary workers, who fought against these evils, as the consequence of the "stab in the back" by Marxism. This theory is the typical fascist theory, and whoever uses it is branded. The Laskis, Gollanczes and Stracheys have now adopted and servilely repeat Hitler's theory of the "stab in the back" in order to account for the French military defeat of 1940 and, on this basis, to pursue the struggle against Marxism. The truth is the contrary. Had the leadership of Communism been followed in place of the leadership of Blum, over all these years since Spain, through Munich, to the outbreak of war, the war would never have taken place. When the war against which they had fought and warned broke out, the Communists gave correct warning of the disastrous outcome to which it would lead, and directed all their efforts to rally the independent forces of the working class. To-day the French Communist Party leads the struggle of all the French working people, carries on

the fight when the others have passed from the scene or openly ranged themselves with fascism, and will lead that struggle to victory, to complete national and social liberation, against all their oppressors and exploiters.

IN Britain, the same menacing path is being trodden by the leadership of the labour movement, in unity with the leadership of the Tory Party, the imperialists, and the friends of fascism. What has one year of this policy brought? It has tied up the labour movement in a formal coalition with the Tory machine, with Chamberlain, in defiance even of the earlier proclamations and pledges of the same leadership in the first months of the war ("Labour is convinced that the interests of the country are best preserved by the existence of an Opposition capable at any moment of becoming the Government. . . . That readiness would be compromised by entrance into the Government, as we saw in the last war"—Laski, "The War and the Future", November, 1939; "There is no chance of the Labour Party joining any Government which is led by or which includes Mr. Chamberlain"—*Daily Herald*, May 10, 1940). This political coalition is only the expression of the surrender of working-class rights, standards and interests to the domination of capital. It has weakened and paralysed the functioning of the labour movement, suspended democracy within it, and produced widespread demoralisation and crumbling of local organisation and activity. It has led to the abolition of the right to strike, the disarming of the workers before capital, the shattering of trade union rights and standards, legal safeguards and hard-won gains of struggle, and the enslavement of the workers to the war machine. On the other hand, it has enormously increased the power of capital by the ruthless drive to intensified monopoly through the whole system of State controls, extraordinary powers and guaranteed profits. At the same time democratic rights have been broken down, and an elaborate system of regulations and emergency powers established which provide the framework for the advance to fascism.

ALL the talk of "war socialism" and "the end of profiteering", with which the Labour Party and trade union leaders endeavoured to decorate this establishment of industrial servitude for the workers and unlimited power and plunder for monopoly capital, now lies in ruins, exposed by the facts of the first year of the war. Between August, 1939, and March, 1940, the official figures of wage rates showed a rise of 8 per cent, while the official figure of the cost of living in the same period showed a rise of 15 per cent. Since then, a steep, further rise in prices has taken place, indicating the beginning of inflationary trends. The burden of taxation has been continuously shifted to increase the proportion of indirect taxation at the expense of direct, that is, to increase the burden of taxation on the consumption of the people. While the volume of earnings in a number of cases will show a greater increase than the rise in rates, owing to the heavy hours worked, against this must be set the physical deterioration through the excessive hours, and the direct losses in the case of those thrown out of their previous employment owing to war-time conditions and transferred to lower-paid jobs, and still more in the case of all the families of those serving in the forces, brought down from the level of the wage earner to the pawnshop and P.A.C. level of the dependants' allowance. Nor is this only a question of the position of

the wage workers. The same war-time machinery of monopoly capitalist control hastens the ruin of innumerable small traders; while the recent case of the shooting and killing of the aged small farmer, who was trying to defend his land on which he had worked for fifty years, by the armed forces sent to evict him, revealed the ruthless process of expropriation applied to agriculture (in the Baltic countries at the same time the big landed estates were being confiscated, while the small farmers with below 75 acres were left in possession—in England the reverse).

CONTRAST the situation of big capital. In May the Liberal-Labour press hailed the Government's Emergency Law as the triumph of "war socialism" and the "end of profiteering":

We accept the new law. . . We rejoice in the part which Labour leaders have played to bring about this revolution in the national economy.

Reactionaries and profit-seekers are reduced to impotence by this new stroke of a new Government. . . .

Excess Profits Tax will be raised to one hundred per cent. This means that in general no profits will be made out of the war by anybody.

(*Daily Herald*, May 23, 1940.)

In all firms working primarily on munitions contracts the profit motive will be virtually eliminated.

(*Daily Herald*, May 24.)

On Wednesday Mr. Attlee quietly and with an impressive absence of rhetoric announced the most complete plans for War Socialism to which a democracy has ever submitted itself.

(*New Statesman*, May 25.)

The headache followed rapidly. The workers could not fail to notice that, after all the loud blazoning, dividends of 20 per cent, 25 per cent and even 44 per cent (Handley Page) continued to be announced by the big firms. By August, the same *Daily Herald* was complaining that 100 per cent E.P.T. was "a fraud":

The idea that 100 per cent E.P.T. is limiting dividends is complete nonsense. In this sense 100 per cent E.P.T. is a fraud—for one simple reason. Dividends are now being paid out of the last year's financial profits, and on those profits E.P.T. was only at 60 per cent. So higher dividends are now in fact being paid and will continue to be paid for many months.

(*Daily Herald*, August 12, 1940.)

THESE deepening class contrasts, inseparably associated with the process of imperialist war; the increasingly difficult conditions of the mass of the people; and the dangers, hardships and uncertainties arising from the advance and intensification of the war, inevitably begin to break down the political passivity and hesitations of the first stage of the war, and give rise to the first signs of mass awakening. In marked contrast to the situation at its opening, the close of the first year of war has seen a gathering mass ferment, an increasingly marked distrust of the ruling class representatives, the first confused forms of approaching crisis. While this gathering ferment is still confused, without clear political orientation, sporadic and not yet finding effective channels of expression in action, there can be no question of its extent or that it is the herald of inner political struggles. The wave of anger and indignation which followed immediately on Dunkerque and the collapse

of France, has deepened and extended over a wide series of fronts and issues, revealing more and more the gulf between the interests of the mass of the people and the ruling finance-capitalist interests. Although this gathering mass dissatisfaction still lacks unity of leadership and organisation, a centralised political drive, or political clearness in relation to the war, these beginnings of awakening are already the most important development of the political situation in Britain, and the key to the future.

THE ruling-class authorities have shown that they very clearly understand the significance of this situation. This is evidenced in the concern of sections of the big capitalist press to take up, actively, the voicing of particular discontents and grievances, while steering clear of any political conclusions, and especially in the shift of the Labour Party organ from the role of defender to that of critic of the Government. The influence of mass pressure is further evidenced in the concern of the Government to announce minor concessions (the sixpenny increase for the soldiers, the reduction of hours in the factories, the retreat on the Silent Column, the promises of review of sentences and of revision of treatment of refugees, etc.). These minor tactical retreats or shows of retreat (often in words rather than in acts) do not contradict, but accompany the main intensified reactionary drive, the introduction of ceaseless new anti-democratic regulations, the economic and financial policy at the expense of the workers, the tightening up of measures of control of the industrial workers, the sporadic police raids and persecutions, the victimisation of militant workers in the factories, the general strengthening of counter-revolutionary preparations. As in the days of Chartism, the Government simultaneously manœuvres, seeks to divert, confuse and break up the gathering mass movement and, at the same time, arms itself with its machinery of repression. The character of the situation is further evidenced in the renewed discussion of the reconstruction of the Government, and of proposals for drawing in additional labour leaders.

THIS situation throws the greatest responsibility on the most active and politically conscious sections of the organised working class, who can alone rally, unite and lead the broad movement of the people. The task is now to rally the many channels of discontent into a powerful common movement with a clear political aim. The first year of war has laid bare all the problems of the war before the people, and has begun the process of exposing and shattering the illusions which have held them back from moving forward in their own interests. The opening of the second year brings more and more to the forefront the tasks of active mass leadership. Of especial importance in this connection is the call for a great People's Convention in October, to draw together the widest masses of the people in the common struggle for their interests, for a People's Government and a People's Peace. The sharp twists and turns of the world crisis and the war situation can bring constantly new needs and conditions of struggle, which make no fixed time-tables easy of fulfilment. But the basic task remains to rally the masses of the people, with the class-conscious organised workers in the vanguard, from the present passivity and impotence before the blows of finance-capital, to active struggle for their own interests and their victory, for their way out of the crisis of the social system which has brought mankind to the present pass. At

the close of the first year of war we will do well to recall the words of the old Zimmerwald Manifesto of international socialism, at the close of the first year of the first world-war: "*Proletarians! Since the outbreak of war, you have placed your energy, your courage, your endurance at the service of the ruling classes. Now you must stand up for your own cause, for the sacred aims of Socialism, for the emancipation of the oppressed nations as well as of the enslaved classes, by means of the irreconcilable proletarian class struggle.*"

R. P. D.

Labour Monthly

Discussion Groups

Discussion Groups are now meeting in the following districts. Will interested readers please get in touch with us and we will give them particulars.

LONDON

Camden Town
Edgware and Mill Hill
Finchley
Hampstead
Hampstead Garden Suburb

St. Pancras
Stamford Hill
Stoke Newington
Walthamstow
Whitechapel

PROVINCES

Barrow-in-Furness
Bath
Birmingham
Blackburn
Bristol
Dublin
Halifax
Kenton, Middlesex
Minehead (West Somerset district)
Newcastle-on-Tyne

Oxford
Pinner, Middlesex
Peterborough
Portsmouth
Sheffield
Stockton-on-Tees
Sidcup
Waltham Cross, Herts
Warrington
Woodford

SPECIAL GROUPS

London Cab Drivers
Medical (now meeting again)

S.E. London Busmen

The Liverpool Left Book Club continues to devote one meeting monthly to a discussion of LABOUR MONTHLY articles.

National Socialism: Labour Party Brand

BY WILLIAM RUST

THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY of the war finds the leaders of the Labour Party, who, in the months preceding the war, rejected the People's Front in the name of their Socialist virginity, fast in the embraces of Churchill and Chamberlain. The rejection of the People's Alliance against Chamberlain and for peace led inevitably to an alliance with Chamberlain and for war. Labour Party policy instead of leading to Socialism has brought the workers under the heel of Diehard Toryism and rule by emergency decrees.

If someone had dared to prophesy at the time of the Southport Conference that the next conference would endorse coalition with the Tory Party behind a programme of "blood, tears, toil and sweat", he would have been laughed to scorn. But the wheel of history has turned again. The successors of Ramsay MacDonald have also entered a Government with Chamberlain; they have brought the Movement to its second great disaster.

The twelve months of the war have witnessed the degeneration of British Labourism at an incredible pace, accompanied by an organisational breakdown. Resorting to the most hypocritical methods in order to bulldoze the workers the Labour leaders have fawned on the ruling class as never before. In September, 1939, Greenwood screamed louder than any Tory for the war to begin and since then the Labour leaders have become the advocates of the most extreme and ferocious measures, including the spreading of the war and provocative measures against the Soviet Union.

During the period of the "deadlock" war the Labour Party played the role of a parliamentary opposition. It supported the Government on all the fundamental issues, including the war budget and the emergency decrees, but permitted itself the luxury of criticisms and divisions from time to time. This was also the period of the political truce, called officially an "electoral stand-still" on the grounds that it was merely a practical arrangement not to hold by-elections under difficult war-time conditions.

But the political truce led inevitably to coalition, as, indeed, it was intended to do. Locally, it resulted in the demoralisation of the labour parties, against which the active elements struggled with great determination and a number of intense by-election fights were carried out. Thus the fight against the political truce became a first-class issue in the movement and over fifty resolutions were put down against it at the Bournemouth Conference. It is typical of the cynicism of the leaders that they who had described the truce as a mere electoral arrangement succeeded at Bournemouth in avoiding the entire issue on the grounds that the decision to enter the Government had automatically removed the true question from the agenda.

The historical setting of the Bournemouth Conference raised fundamental class questions before the British Labour Movement. The governmental

crisis was an expression of the bankruptcy of the British ruling class which, having striven for nearly a decade to create an anti-Soviet front was threatened with defeat at the hands of that very German imperialism, whose might it had re-created for an entirely different purpose. This was a situation ripe for the independent leadership of the working class. The Communist Party urged the Conference to:

Send a call to every man and woman in the Labour Party, trade unions, co-operatives and other working-class organisations to get together now, this minute, this hour, this day, to work as they have never worked in their lives to bring about the defeat of the tiny handful of landlords, bankers and employers who have betrayed everything that the British people expect from life. Let the traditional battle cry once more resound wherever workers are gathered together—"Workers of all lands, unite!"

How that conference was prevented from discussing the issues before it is well known. The leaders had already entered the Government; the delegates could not alter that. War hysteria was worked up, the block vote was set in motion. In just over two hours the vote was taken.

Even so, the voice of the anti-war minority could not be silenced. It spoke accusingly and for all their bombast the leaders were afraid of those who spoke about the "imperialist war".

In the light of historical events it can now be seen that the Labour leaders practised a cruel deception on the Bournemouth Conference. The victories they promised turned out to be a "colossal military disaster" and their "War Socialism" is nothing but a new name for a profiteers' ramp. About France, which one month later collapsed and surrendered, they told nothing but a series of fantastic lies. Blum, who was especially brought to Bournemouth in order to justify the threatened use of the guillotine against the true leaders of the people, succeeded in completely concealing the state of decay and treachery in bourgeois France behind a violent outburst directed against the Communists. He was enthusiastically applauded.

Since then, the French Socialist leaders, who saw in the war the opportunity to crush Communism, to ingratiate themselves with the two hundred ruling families and to obtain comfortable posts in the war machine, have received their due reward. They have been flung on the dung heap of history and their organisations dissolved. In the fierce scramble for posts under the Vichy government only a few have retained a foothold, the most prominent being the new Minister of Labour, M. Belin, the close associate of Sir Walter Citrine on the late but unlamented Anglo-French Trade Union Council.

British Labourism is treading the same path. "The era of dying capitalism is also the era of dying Social Democratism in the Labour Movement," wrote Stalin. And the truth of this is seen in the fate of those organisations that stoke up the fires of imperialist war and sell themselves to the fascist-minded bourgeoisie.

In the first stages of the war the chief task of the Labour leaders was to provide an ideological justification for it. This they did under the guise of "Peace Aims". To-day, having been admitted to the inner counsels of the capitalist state they have the task of directly administering the war machine, exploiting and oppressing the workers and tying up the Labour organisations to the state machine.

The first statement of peace aims issued by the Executive Committee of

the Labour Party in November was an elaboration of the plans of Anglo-French imperialism, a federated Europe controlled by the bankers of London and Paris to be established after a long and bloody war. This statement was also remarkable for its attack on the Soviet Union (accused of sharing the spoils with the aggressor because it rescued thirteen million workers and peasants from their Polish masters) and its grovelling before Chamberlain.

The new declaration on the war which the Labour Party published in February came after the meeting of the Allied Supreme War Council, which decided to extend the war to new fronts, to send men as well as munitions to Finland in the war of intervention against the Soviet Union. The leadership of the Labour Party hastened to support this policy, to repudiate any suggestion of peace and to abase itself once again before Chamberlain.

A savage hatred for the Land of Socialism runs through all of their statements. Greenwood's attack on the Soviet Union two weeks after the outbreak of the war and pledge to "resurrect" the corrupt, decadent state of Poland still stands. It was followed by the infamous incitement over Finland and the open advocacy of war on the Soviet Union by certain Labour M.P.s. By the time of the Bournemouth Conference much of this spleen had to be held in check, not because there had been any change of heart but the Soviet victories in Finland and the disastrous turn in the fortunes of British Imperialism had wrecked the plans for switching the war and made necessary a more cautious policy.

These earlier statements of war aims also laid great emphasis on the "new world order" that was to emerge after the war. But after Bournemouth the claim was transferred to what the Labour ministers were already doing in the Government, where they were alleged to be actually introducing Socialism. "Revolutionary changes have been forced upon the nation by the war," wrote the *Daily Herald*. From the *Daily Express* came an amusing echo. "It is now a Socialist Britain," declared Lord Beaverbrook's paper.

The "revolutionary changes" consisted of the organised shovelling of the wealth of the country into the furnace of war, the strengthening of the power of the monopolies and trusts with the full backing of the state, forms of industrial conscription and the abolition of the right to strike, state guarantee of profits, etc. There has certainly been a change in the relations between industry and the state in the sense that the ruling class has striven to pass over to a war economy, to co-ordinate the production of armaments and drastically to cut down the production of consumption goods. This process went on for many years in Germany, where it was called "National Socialism".

The "War Socialism" of the British Labour Party is essentially the same, even up to the point of seeking to transform the organisations of the Labour movement into a type of "Labour Front" organisation. For this is the real meaning of the network of organisations under the direction of the Ministry of Labour now being established in substitution for the trade unions and shop stewards; supply boards, compulsory arbitration tribunals, etc.

This shocking deception, which has the effrontery to describe steps towards the open dictatorship of finance-capital as an advance to Socialism, is not put forward without "theoretical" justification. In fact, the Labour Party Executive keeps its own tame intellectual, Professor Harold Laski, precisely for this purpose. It has also the services of the Fabian Society.

It is Laski's special task to mouth those Socialist phrases which his col-

leagues have either forgotten or are too busy in the war machine to bother with. When the Labour Party was in Opposition Laski wrote pamphlets to prove that Socialist principles could be upheld only in this way. When the Labour leaders entered the Government Laski wrote pamphlets to prove that this was an essential step to achieve "Socialist planning". Adroit and plausible Laski belongs to the boneless-wonder type of intellectual. The gyrations of Transport House are no problem for him.

In his pamphlet, "The Labour Party, the War and the Future", published soon after the war, Laski declared against entry into the Government and stated that :

Labour retains, once more, complete freedom to criticise the British Government's use of victory and to secure the authority from the electorate to organise the reconstruction of Europe on that Socialist basis which is alone, in its view, compatible with enduring peace.

At the Bournemouth Conference Laski placed a halo of Socialism over the heads of the new Labour Ministers. In a speech described by the *Daily Herald* as "Socialist Planning as Way to Victory", Laski said that the new statement on Home Policy was :

an attempt to recover the dynamic of democracy by a method based on Socialism . . . even in war it was essential to plan on the Socialist principle that there must be bread for all before there is cake for any.

Such declarations served the purpose of sweeping many of the delegates off their feet. They saw in it a promise of independence and these hopes overwhelmed the voice of working-class logic that told them that no matter who sits in the Cabinet real power is always in the hands of the big financiers and capitalists. In 1931 the leaders bitterly complained that the banks brought down the Labour Government. The power of the banks is even stronger to-day.

But it has not taken very long for the real meaning of "War Socialism" to become clear to the rank and file of the Labour Party.

The two Labour ministers most closely connected with the direction of economic affairs, Greenwood and Morrison, have demonstrated by their utter futility that they are the controlled, not the controllers. Attacked in the House of Commons over the case of the Richard Thomas Company (where steel production is alleged to have declined owing to a struggle with the Bank of England) Morrison curtly answered that he could not go on "pursuing disputes in the capitalist world". If a "Socialist" minister cannot do anything about the state of affairs in the capitalist world it may well be asked just what does he exist for.

Greenwood is in no better position. Even the *New Statesman*, which habitually apologises for the Labour Ministers, finds it necessary to turn the spotlight on Greenwood who, as Chairman of the Production Council, has simply let the profiteering ramp run riot. It writes :

Arthur Greenwood has failed to insist on a proper co-ordination of departmental policies in terms of a comprehensive economic plan. Only when this has been done will it be possible to get a tolerable Budget, as the financial correlate of an economic policy devised in real terms of men, machines, materials and means of transport. . . . Not only the Labour Movement but the whole country is growing impatient of Mr. Greenwood's easy-going pace. (August 17.)

But this is superficial criticism which seeks in personal shortcomings an explanation of the chaos and disorganisation of a decadent imperialism. Even if Greenwood was a competent person (which he is not) his performance would have been very little different. The entrenched interests which see in the war the golden opportunity to bolster up their own position, to make huge profits and attack trade union conditions, can only be moved by a direct frontal attack that would strike at their economic might. And this means calling the workers to action. The very thought terrifies Transport House.

In contrast to Greenwood and Morrison, bouquets are handed out to Bevin, who is said to have delivered the goods. Naturally, when it comes to controlling the working class the capitalist state works with great rapidity and smoothness; in fact, there are a host of officials who have yearned for years to establish the machinery of compulsory arbitration, registration, transference, etc. They and the employers saw in Bevin a gift from heaven.

Thus "War Socialism" has quickly shown itself to be the greater control of labour by the state and the greater control of the state by capital.

These policies have led to an organisational decline of the Labour Party already indicated by the membership figures given at the Bournemouth Conference. Membership is down by 20,000 but the loss is undoubtedly greater as the number of membership cards issued this year is 100,000 less than last.

Also, these figures give only part of the picture. The other part is the crumbling away of the local organisations which are simply not meeting. Such reports come from all over the country. The bureaucratic machine is maintained, the leading officials continue their contact with Transport House and carry through their committee meetings, but the life and spirit of the local bodies has disappeared.

This situation is seen most markedly in the local and divisional labour parties where the national coalition and the restriction of the powers of local authorities has automatically put paid to much of the normal activities. But it also applies in a large measure to the trade union branches as well, a contributory factor being the long hours of work and consequent difficulty of meeting.

In the early months of the war, Transport House, alarmed by the widening cracks in its political machine, issued instructions for the regular maintenance of activity by the local labour organisations. But the cause of the trouble is too deep-rooted to be put right by an occasional circular. The cause of the decline is the policies of Transport House itself, the tying up of the Labour organisations to the war machinery of the capitalist state and the growing disillusionment amongst the members.

The decline has been further accelerated by the expulsion policy pursued by the National Executive. After the expulsion of D. N. Pritt and such well-known trade unionists as Harry Adams and W. J. R. Squance, it is clear that neither independence of thought nor militancy of action will be tolerated. Even such a body as the National Council for Civil Liberty does not escape the displeasure of Transport House.

The effect of these expulsions, black circulars and grey circulars, on the local Labour workers may well be imagined. Appeals to loyalty are no answer to the anxious questioning now going on in the minds of those who built up the movement in the localities and who held to their spade and donkey work despite all the careerism and faint-heartedness of the leaders.

The results of one year of war face the Labour workers with the necessity of taking stock of their position. To turn away from organised political activity would only play into the hands of the class enemy who thrives on the apathy of the working class. The situation demands a revival of all forms of working-class and democratic activity, the forging of a new unity that will enable the people to find a solution of their problems and a way out of the imperialist war.

"The independence and activity of the Labour Movement must be restored," declared the Communist Party in a recent statement calling for the organisation of a great united movement in the fight for a People's Government. The fact that such a call is made and that the Communist Party comes forward at all vital moments with a lead to the workers shows in a deep historical sense the basic difference in the position of the working class movement at the present time in comparison to the last war.

Out of the last war came the Communist Parties and the Communist International as an expression of the political growth of the workers, their hatred of capitalism and its crimes and their belief in the victory of Socialism. Celebrating this year its twentieth anniversary, the Communist Party of Great Britain works untiringly for the unity of the workers, and puts forward those policies, based on Marxism-Leninism, which are most likely to rally the workers in defence of their own interests and to create confidence in their own power to change the world.

At the present time, it is vitally necessary throughout the ranks of the Labour Movement to direct attention on the following proposals as indicative of the path now to be followed :

- (1) The carrying through of a great mass campaign for the coming to power of a People's Government that will lead the way forward out of the war and towards a People's Peace.
- (2) The development of a united movement for increased wages, pensions, soldiers' pay and dependants' allowances. For the repeal of the Purchase Tax and for the conscription of wealth. For the restoration of trade union and democratic rights.
- (3) Maintenance of the unity of the labour, trade union and co-operative organisations against all attempts at expulsion of the militants. Organised drive for the revival of the local labour organisations on militant lines, especially the work of the trade union branches. Consolidation of unity in the localities through common action between labour organisations, factory committees, tenants' associations and other democratic bodies.
- (4) Building up of the shop stewards committees and factory committees.
- (5) Advocacy of international working-class solidarity, unity with the Soviet Union and common struggle with the colonial peoples, especially the people of India.

The campaign for a People's Convention, now meeting with enthusiastic support throughout the country, has already raised issues of this kind before the active spirits of the Labour Movement. Conditions are favourable for a big united advance.

Out of this striving to find a common ground for united action there must come a new unity on fundamentals. The policies of reformism have collapsed and there can be no going back to the conceptions of a gradual transition to Socialism, of a capitalist class meekly obeying the voice of the people. The workers can no longer be content with a party that bases its policy on co-operation with the capitalists and its organisation on the electoral struggle.

Is this a War for Democracy?

BY E. M. WINTERTON

Mr. Peshekhonov does not understand that, while the capitalists are in power, he is defending, not the interests of the whole of Russia, but the avaricious interests of Russian and "Allied" imperialist capital. Mr. Peshekhonov does not understand that the war will cease to be an imperialist, predatory war of conquest only after a break with the capitalists, with their secret treaties, with their annexations (their seizure of others' lands), with their banking and financial swindles. Mr. Peshekhonov does not understand that only after this would the war become—if the enemy were to reject a formal offer of a just peace—a defensive, just war. Mr. Peshekhonov does not understand that the defensive power of the country, after ridding itself of the yoke of capitalism, and after giving the land to the peasants and placing the banks and factories under workers' control, would be many times stronger than the defensive power of a capitalist country.—Lenin: "Will the Bolsheviks Maintain Power?" (October, 1917.)

LENIN WROTE THESE words, so remarkably suitable for today, after six months' experience of immeasurably the widest democracy that the world had ever seen in capitalist conditions. In deed far more than in form, the workers and peasants had held power through their Soviets, or councils of deputies, ever since the overthrow of Tsardom in February, 1917; and though they had voluntarily, through the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary majority in the Soviets, let the substance of power—supreme control of the army, police and government institutions—slip back into the hands of the capitalist class, even to the point of an attempted counter-revolution (the Kornilov rising in August), still the masses retained sufficient strength to nip the rebellion in the bud. After a period of reactionary repression in the summer, all parties—from the right to the Bolsheviks—could publish their papers and hold their meetings freely. Factory workers and peasants alike openly discussed whether or not their representative bodies—the Soviets—should take power. Workmen's committees and shop stewards came out into the open in the factories, fighting the employers. The Army discussed politics more or less freely, while Red Guards—armed volunteers in the factories—drilled and were armed under the authority of the Soviets. Never, under any form of property system in any country, had there been such a widely *effective* degree of democracy for the working people, as well as for their "betters"; never in any country had the common people been so free to speak their mind, by word or in print, without fear of immediately losing their job and their liberty.

Yet Lenin judged it opportune, as we have just seen, to remind the workers again and again that even these democratic gains, won in the teeth of capitalist opposition, did not make a war, waged with the capitalist class in power,

into a just and defensive war. The capitalists were still in control of the State machine; the economic life of the country was still being run to bring them a profit; the war aims of the country were still, in fact, the war aims of the class which controlled it.

It was quite clear from the moment the present war began that the ruling class of Great Britain, where the workers are very far from enjoying the freedom of self-expression, under protection of their own organisations, which was possessed by the Russian workers in October, 1917, were seriously perturbed by the possibility that the British workers might "learn Russian" in the course of the war. Its imperialist *origin* could hardly be kept concealed, after the spectacle of the six years' encouragement of Axis aggression by the Baldwin-Chamberlain Governments, and their refusal of an effective Peace Bloc with the U.S.S.R. on the very eve of a German attack on Poland. The imperialist *aims* of the war were either trumpeted abroad very loudly, in its first few months, by the influential champions of various schemes for a "Federal Union" of Britain and France to rule Europe, or else have been tacitly admitted by the steady refusal to grant the demand of the Indian National Congress, on September 14, that

the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution, through a Constituent Assembly, without external interference, and must guide their own policy.

Unless, therefore, the British people could be kept in a state of mental fog about the nature of the régime they were being asked to defend, there was grave peril that the imperialist *methods* by which the war must inevitably be waged would open their eyes in the fulness of time to the changes which must be made in Great Britain to make this a defensive, just war.

Hence the deafening and long-sustained outcry, from the moment the war began, about the war being waged for democracy and against tyranny. The Tory Party had licked the boots of Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese, so long as there seemed the slightest chance of appeasing them at someone else's expense or of involving them in war with the U.S.S.R. Hatred, slander, double-dealing, treachery was the treatment which successive Tory-controlled Governments reserved for the victims of the Axis—China, Abyssinia, Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia—and for their champions in the U.S.S.R., their defenders in this country. Those who exposed Nazi and Fascist barbarism, tyranny and aggression were denounced by British accomplices of Hitler and Mussolini—Mr. Chamberlain and all his jackal armies fed by the City, the F.B.I., the landowning and dividend-drawing classes—as "warmongers". Now, overnight there was a miraculous transformation. The true nature of Fascism had suddenly been discovered. And the political system under which the British people had been forced to endure the unashamed rule of Hitler's friends—under which, to take only one example, it had been shamefully and impudently swindled at the General Election of 1935, by a deliberate Tory lie about support for collective security—became the citadel and symbol of democracy for which millions might gladly suffer and die.

So also with the Labour Party. Its leaders had rejected with contempt (and had spared no mean insinuation or shady manœuvre in doing so) every campaign aimed at giving expression to the nation's disgust with Chamberlain. Intoning their hypocritical phrases of sympathy for the Chinese people,

Republican Spain, democratic Czechoslovakia, the Labour leaders had left no stone unturned in preventing a democratic front of the British people against the allies and patrons of the Nazi and Fascist butchers—the “National” Governments of Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Chamberlain. But the high priests of Transport House also underwent a sudden change when Mr. Chamberlain declared war on Germany, on September 3. The cause of democracy, which was not good enough to justify a peaceful alliance of the working people of Great Britain to enforce aid for Republican Spain or a genuine Peace Bloc with the U.S.S.R., was good enough to justify sending millions to war when the representatives of British finance-capital desired it.

As for the Liberal Party, after giving half-hearted support from time to time for the idea of a popular front in defence of democracy, it used all the influence it had so gained to swing the nation into war under the control of the very enemies of democracy whom it had previously criticised. Thereby, of course, the Liberal capitalists were only performing their time-honoured role. They led the British people into the butchery of 1914–18 from the majority benches, while the fortune of politics obliged them, in 1939, to do their part from those of a minority—that was the only difference. The war into which Imperialist intrigue with Hitler had plunged the British people was, for the Liberals, like the war which had sprung from their rivalry with the Kaiser—a war for democracy, but under other management.

There is no need to recall all the volumes of shuffling half-truths and revolting platitudes with which the crusaders called the British people in the press, the pulpit and in Parliament, on the radio and the public platform, to war against Germany as a war for freedom of thought, self-expression, association—in short, as a war for democracy. They knew that they were playing on a responsive chord. The British people have fought for democracy of various kinds and degrees many a time—when the peasants of England marched on London in 1381 against feudal oppression, when the British people rose against the Spanish Armada’s menace of feudal restoration in 1587–8, when they backed Parliament against Charles Stuart, when they supported John Wilkes against the Whig oligarchy in the eighteenth century, and forced through the first Reform Bill in 1832, in the great demonstrations of the Chartists in the forties and of the trade unionists in the sixties, in the Dock strike of 1889, the fight against the House of Lords in 1911, the Councils of Action of 1920, the General Strike of 1926, the great unemployed demonstrations of 1931, and marches against Mosley’s Blackshirts of 1934–5. The British people love democracy because they have always understood it as in practice, not in any academic or philosophical sense, but as a battle against the tyranny of property over the common people. What more attractive sauce, therefore, wherein to serve up the otherwise doubtful and repellent dish of a new imperialist war?

The lengths to which the “Labour” apologists for the war have shown themselves prepared to go would be particularly laughable, were it not disgusting. They were somewhat embarrassed, during the first stage of the war, by the unfortunate circumstances that it was launched and led by the very people whom they had criticised for friendship with fascism. This difficulty they overcome by the simple expedient of calling on the workers to support the war on credit, as it were, and adjuring the Government to be “more democratic”. In their turn, the “left” intellectuals of the *New Statesman* and

the *Tribune*, while also calling for support of the war on credit, implored the Labour leaders to be “more courageous”. Thus all were comfortable. On February 3, for example, Mr. Attlee boldly urged the Government to disprove the “lie that Britain is fighting an imperialist war” by renouncing all claim to special rights in colonial territories, declaring preparedness to bring all British colonies under the mandatory system, pressing forward with the extension of self-government “wherever it is practicable”, etc. It will be noted that this declaration had not prevented Mr. Attlee from supporting the war for five months without any such disproof, nor did it make the slightest difference to the Government’s policy when Mr. Attlee himself joined it, three months later. But it served.

There was, again, the loudly-heralded “Declaration of the Rights of Man”, launched by Mr. H. G. Wells, published in its first draft (appropriately enough) by *The Times* on February 2, 1940, “discussed” with much pomp by a carefully-selected body of contributors in the columns of the *Daily Herald*, and finally promulgated by the same newspaper on April 20—since when, its purpose being presumably served, it has never been heard of more. In this it followed the fortunes of an earlier work of the Chairman of its Drafting Committee, Lord Sankey—the gentleman selected after the last war to gull the miners with a portentous inquiry and voluminous report, put away to rot on the library shelves once the danger point of the demand for nationalisation of mines was passed.

The “Declaration”, like the Sankey Report, was expressly intended to persuade its readers that a new world was dawning (“a rational reconstruction of human affairs . . . upon a world scale”) although its authors had even less authority than Lord Sankey in 1919 for pretending that there was any likelihood of its being adopted. Yet a close examination reveals that for the most part it merely repeats some well-known provisions of the original “Declaration of the Rights of Man” of the French Convention of 1793, *without*—significantly enough—their saving provision that

when the government violates the rights of the People, insurrection is, to the People and to every portion of the People, the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties,

and *with*—equally significant of the “Socialism” of its Labour sponsors—even more concern for the rights of property than was displayed by the great bourgeois revolutionaries of 150 years ago.

Their article protecting the rights of property is reproduced almost intact—those rights of property which 150 years of bourgeois rule have proved in *practice* to reduce democracy to a mere caricature, so far as the workers and peasants are concerned, and still more in the case of colonial peoples.

The citizen’s right to instruction becomes “sufficient education to enable him to be as useful and interested a citizen as his capacity allows.” Under a title that had a revolutionary meaning in France as long ago as 1848, not to speak of the U.S.S.R. to-day—“Right to Work”—the daring statement, worthy of some Council of Employers and Employed, is made that a man may “earn such pay as the contribution that his work makes to the welfare of the community may justify”, that he may “make suggestions” about the nature of his employment, and that work “for the sole object of profit making” shall not be lawful (as though the Londonderrys of 1839 had not already pro-

claimed that they were employing little boys and girls of 7 and 8 underground in the mines out of purely altruistic motives!)

Even freedom of movement—a new right to fight for, well thought of in the age of the odious Native Pass Laws of South Africa, anti-Negro vagrancy laws in the United States, and industrial serfdom regulations in Nazi Germany—is conditioned by the proviso that man can visit “any kind of country, mountain, moorland, river, lake, sea or ocean . . . at his own expense”; a condition that leaves the vast majority of the world’s working people exactly where they were.

When the Labour leaders themselves joined the Government, however, it obviously became necessary to raise the pitch of exhortation. The wildest flights of extravagance began. *The New Statesman* (May 25) proclaimed Mr. Attlee’s announcement of various measures mobilising national resources for war to be “the most complete plans for War Socialism to which a democracy has ever submitted itself”. The following week it had slightly moderated its transports: “We cannot actually achieve Socialism during the war, but we can institute a whole series of Government controls which, after the war, may be used for Socialist ends”. They might lead “either to the Fascist or to the Socialist planned economy; Labour’s participation in the Government is our best guarantee that the second alternative will prevail”. Not only so: by July 13, the *New Statesman* was boldly urging the Government to “make European revolution the basis of our strategy”, and to create, here and abroad, an “organ of revolution”. And Mr. Harold Laski, in the *Tribune*, was declaring, after an encounter with a Labour Party conference in the Midlands, that

the miracle of effort the workers have contributed in these eight amazing weeks has not been for Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Kingsley Wood, for Mr. Montagu Norman and Lord Stamp. For this England, the workers will not scrap trade union rules, work long hours of overtime, give up their holidays or lend their savings to the Government. They will do it for Attlee and Greenwood, for Bevin and Herbert Morrison, if these men, as the leaders of the working class movement, combine the imagination and the resolution to see that this becomes a government of social justice in the fullest sense. . . . What is the victory to be for? It will be a victory of which the workers will be the architects. Is it to be a workers’ peace? Is it to be a workers’ Britain after the peace? Those are the questions Attlee and Greenwood must seek to answer now.

These passages have only been selected as an example of what the Labour “intellectuals” were saying: it is common memory how the capitalist papers were proclaiming Labour’s participation in the Government, and still more the measures announced by Attlee, to be practically equivalent to the inauguration of Socialism in Britain. Mr. Laski only omitted to explain (1) why he and other members of the Labour Party executive just as ardently supported the “war for democracy” when Messrs. Chamberlain, Kingsley Wood and Montagu Norman were in supreme control of the Government and when there was no pretence of a government of social justice, a workers’ peace, etc.; (2) why Messrs. Chamberlain and Montagu Norman would be less successful in resisting plans for social justice, drawn by a Government in which they (and their nominees) hold the strings of power, than they were in their previous activities; (3) why Messrs. Attlee and Greenwood, Bevin and Morrison, should be relied upon to fight for a

workers' peace and a workers' Britain, from inside the Government, with any more conspicuous zeal, let alone remarkable success, than they fought for democracy when they were outside the Government.

These are the grand questions facing the working class in the present war, and neither Mr. Laski nor any other of the "Labour" imperialists and "Socialist" jingoes dare to answer them. They do not dare, because the answers would reveal to the working class the full extent of the confidence tricks which have been played on it during the first twelve months of the war. First, in September, the workers were induced to support the imperialist war on credit, on the supposition that Messrs. Attlee, Laski and Co. would see that it was turned into a war for democracy. Then, after May, when the misfortunes of war put the country into a dire extremity, and the Labour leaders rushed to save their capitalist masters, the workers were induced to redouble their war effort, again on credit, on the supposition that Messrs. Attlee, Bevin and Morrison would contrive to turn it into a war for Socialism.

Yet the bitter facts of the first twelve months have been fighting their way into the workers' knowledge, overcoming the barriers of Government censorship and "Labour" trickiness alike. Those facts reveal that a war originating in imperialist intrigue, controlled by imperialists on both sides, pursued by the imperialists on both sides for imperialist ends, is being conducted by methods equally characteristic of imperialism, and therefore no more conducive to democracy and socialism on one side than on the other.

There is no need for Communists, who first took the field against Hitler in his own country, whose best fighters are rotting and tortured in thousands in his jails and concentration camps, who suffered persecution and abuse in all capitalist countries because of their exposure of Hitlerism and the way to fight it, to dilate at length on the methods of Nazi Germany. They can leave that to the ready-made anti-Nazis, from Mr. Chamberlain to Mr. Herbert Morrison. The honourable anti-Nazi and the genuine Socialist is he who is as ready to risk unpopularity by exposing the anti-democratic tyranny and swindling of his "own" imperialists in war-time as he was in peace-time, by fighting for a *peace* front against the Nazis at home and abroad. And in fact, as opposed to fancy, democracy under British capitalism is also being proved by war-time experience to be democracy for the rich but not for the poor.

If we take Mr. Attlee's much vaunted Defence Act for the conscription of "everybody and everything", it has proved to be a rod for the poor, but a gentle caress for the rich. One feeble attempt to take over a factory produced a High Court injunction and a hasty retreat by the Government department concerned. When aluminium scrap is required, huge stocks are left in private merchants' possession, and housewives are asked to sacrifice their saucepans. An average rate of profit (not livelihood) is guaranteed to factories doing war work. Great private estates and parklands are left untouched. But tens of thousands of workers are transferred from place to place without a "by your leave", hundreds of thousands of engineers must register for industrial mobilisation, large numbers of skilled tradesmen must continue their occupation in uniform and at army pay, and strikes are prohibited.

If we turn to the organisation of the public services, we find that every new Ministry, every new auxiliary organisation like the W.A.T.S., even the Local Defence Volunteers, automatically, as of right, become the happy hunting ground of responsible positions for the landed gentry, businessmen,

employers, retired colonels, peers and their dependants. They were nominated by the Minister concerned without public control and without (as the National Council for Civil Liberties has pointed out in its pamphlet "Your Freedom in Danger") public-minded Civil Servants having the freedom to protest. The rank-and-file jobs were for the workers.

The rich are free to talk in their clubs, in their private mansions and country houses, about the conduct of the war. The rich not only control the press and the news agency through limited and private companies, but also freely publish such private pro-Fascist and anti-Soviet propaganda as the bulletins of the "Imperial Policy Group", composed of prominent Tory M.P.s, peers and ex-Ministers. But the poor are prevented from taking political literature or carrying on political discussions into the places where they meet—the factories—on the pretext that these are "protected places", under a regulation which was supposed to be aimed at spies. In their chief place of recreation—the public house—they are threatened by secret agents who listen to their conversation, and by the regulation punishing the creation of "alarm and despondency". The only newspaper independent of a millionaire owner, and therefore capable of expressing an unfettered working-class opinion—the *Daily Worker*—may be suppressed at will by the autocratic decision of a Home Secretary, whose apprenticeship was served under the notorious reactionary Joynson-Hicks, while his journeyman's period began as Governor of Bengal, at a time of wholesale repression.

Censorship of press opinion, it was announced at the beginning of the war, would never be tolerated. As an extreme example, it was publicly stated by the Secretary of War that soldiers would be allowed to read the *Daily Worker* in barracks should they so choose. In fact, censorship of opinion for the rich—that is, for the millionaire-owned newspapers—has been avoided, and tentative suggestions by Mr. Duff Cooper in this direction provoked a howl of protest and a hasty repudiation. But for the poor, it was a different story. Not only were publications like the *Daily Worker* and the *Labour Monthly* prohibited for export, but so was a paper confined entirely to defending better relations with the U.S.S.R., like *Russia To-day*. The difficulty of censoring leaflets issued by the Communist Party (as a makeshift way of compensating for its monetary inability to "push" a big circulation for its newspaper) was overcome by making their mere distribution an act liable to police prosecution as "insulting behaviour".

Evacuation of children overseas, it was announced, would be equally available to rich and poor. But, by the merest chance, both rich and poor were given equal facilities to make "private arrangements" before the Government scheme began working. Naturally, this "equality" told almost exclusively in favour of the rich. The lists of children arriving in American ports began to sound like a daily sneer of contempt at the poor. And when protests were heard in Parliament, it transpired that "unforeseen difficulties" had made the Government scheme almost ineffective for months to come.*

Food rationing is applied with strict equality to rich and poor. Both rich and poor, also, are equally free to escape its worst rigours by dining and lunching at their clubs and favourite restaurants. So also the state provision

* Except in the case of leading German and Czechoslovakian communists like Koenen, Beuer and Kreibich, interned and even deported as "dangerous" by the Government which the Labour intellectuals pretend can make a "European revolution".

of bomb-proof shelters for the people was rejected as unnecessary, and Anderson shelters were made available for the poor instead. Of course if, in fact, the rich built bomb-proof shelters for themselves in such places as Buckingham Palace, town and country mansions, famous public schools, etc.—well, “the *principle* of the thing is what matters”, and the poor are equally free to build them for themselves at their own expense.

To take a final example: the British Empire which is supposed to be at war with Nazi Germany on account of the devotion of the British Government to democracy, has 375 million people, of its total population of 500 millions (75 per cent), living in India. It might have been supposed that devotion to democracy would bring a genuine response to the demand (already quoted) of the party which swept the board even in the very restricted elections permitted in India—the National Congress. But in August we still find the British Government offering a transparent and impudent fraud to India, in the shape of a *promise* to set up a purely *consultative* body *after* the war, to *discuss* the lines of an Indian Constitution, without the least power to enforce its decisions: the Indian people, in the meanwhile, to co-operate to the full in a war for the greater glory of a democracy in which they are not allowed to share, and of a British ruling class which continues to draw dividends, interests, pensions and other form of tribute from India, to the tune of not less than £130,000,000 a year! This, too, against a background of increased severity in repression throughout India since September, 1939, particularly against the Communists (and in India, as in France under Daladier, this had the effect of terrorising thousands of active people who were not members of the Communist Party, but would have been ready to lead their fellows in struggle for their rights, like any Communist).

The tale is far from complete, but it will suffice. To round it off, one thing more should be emphasised. The leaders of the Labour Party who brought the support of the working people of this country to the feet of Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Churchill in September 1939, and May 1940; and the so-called “left wing intellectuals” who brought the support of an active and disgusted minority (some of it, not all) to the feet of the Labour leaders on the same occasions: all share to the full the responsibility for these “democratic” developments of the last twelve months. For they supported a war which was the continuation of imperialist policy, carried on by other means but under the direction of the same imperialist ruling class: and, willing that end, Messrs. Attlee and all his long tail of followers, including the *New Statesman* and the *Tribune*, willed the means.

Thus from the first twelve months of the new imperialist world-war emerges a picture of capitalist democracy in Britain in no essentials differing from that drawn by Lenin in his chapter on “Bourgeois and Proletarian Democracy” in “The Proletarian Revolution and Kautsky the Renegade” (1919); or earlier, in the fifth chapter of “The State and Revolution” (1917):

In capitalist society, under the conditions most favourable to its development, we have more or less complete democracy in the democratic republic. But this democracy is always restricted by the narrow framework of capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains, in reality, a democracy for the minority, only for the possessing classes, only for the rich. Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics, freedom for the slave-owners. Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation, the modern wage slaves

are also so crushed by want and poverty that "they cannot be bothered with democracy", "they cannot be bothered with politics"; in the ordinary peaceful course of events the majority of the population is debarred from participating in social and political life. . . . Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the democracy of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the mechanism of capitalist democracy, everywhere in the "petty"—so-called petty—details of the suffrage (residential qualification, exclusion of women, etc.) and in the technique of the representative institutions in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for "beggars"!), in the purely capitalist organisation of the daily press, etc., etc.—on all sides we see restriction after restriction on democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions, obstacles for the poor, seem slight, especially in the eyes of one who has never known want himself and has never been in close contact with the oppressed classes in their mass life (and nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths, of the bourgeois publicists and politicians, are of this category); but, in their sum total, these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics, from taking an active part in democracy. Marx grasped this *essence* of capitalist democracy splendidly when, in analysing the experience of the Commune, he said that the oppressed were allowed, once every few years, to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class should misrepresent them in Parliament.*

It is no answer to this indictment, or to the record of the last twelve months to say that such restrictions are inevitable in war-time; for the indictment of capitalist democracy in Britain to-day is not that, is restricted, but that it is a class democracy, with few and minor restrictions for the rich, and very large and sweeping restrictions for the poor.

Nor is it an answer to say that the enemy is at the gates, and therefore it is idle and irrelevant, if not mischievous, to ask whether there is democracy for the rich or for the poor. It is only too true that the British people, at the time of writing, is in deadlier peril than at any time before in its history. But the great defeats of the Allies which brought the British people to this pass—the overthrow, first of Poland and then of France—were due, above all, as any dispassionate and well-informed person must admit, to the open and brutal dictatorship of the rich which existed from the outset in Poland, and was rapidly created in France. Thus the question of democracy is far from irrelevant, even from the standpoint of national defence. And it is precisely when the danger to the people is greatest that the question of the régime becomes most acute. Lenin put the issue most concisely in the passage quoted at the beginning of this article. In the terms of to-day, the way out for the British people is not confidence in the imperialists Chamberlain, Churchill or Attlee, but the formation of a People's Government, with a programme of democracy for the poor—which alone could make this a just war.

And it is equally no answer to break into vulgar and gross slander, as Sir Norman Angell does in his new book, "Why Freedom Matters", and say that the Communists are "totalitarians", that they despise democracy, that freedom, for them, is a "bourgeois illusion", and so forth. Even the briefest acquaintance with Lenin's writings on the subject, mentioned earlier—writings followed by Stalin on numerous occasions, and by all Com-

* The writer ventures humbly but earnestly to beg the reader to study—or read—Lenin's great works (great in meaning, not in compass) which have a multitude of astonishingly apposite lessons for to-day: "The State and Revolution" "Will the Bolsheviks Maintain Power?" and "The Proletarian Revolution and Kautsky the Renegade" (all published for a few pence by Lawrence and Wishart).

munist writers—should demonstrate the unscrupulousness or the ignorance of Sir Norman Angell and all his school. Marxists have always recognised the progressive nature of modern bourgeois democracy, compared with earlier forms (the democracy of the Greek slave-holding city, the merchant democracies of the Middle Ages, the democracy of Victorian industrial England, etc.); but they have simultaneously underlined its limitations, due to its class character which, in times of stress, were apt to turn into the very opposite of democracy. Marxists, so far from “despising” democracy as a bourgeois illusion, have always treated present-day bourgeois democracy as a series of concessions won by the people from the ruling classes in hard and frequently bloody struggles; to be regarded, however, not as the final stage of human political achievement, but as weapons to be used in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class, and through them of all the exploited and oppressed—without which there can be no real extension of democracy to the whole human race.

Moreover, the Communists, who are the only Marxists of to-day, have shown again and again that, for them, deeds square with words. Who, before and after Hitler came to power, strove for the widest possible People’s Front in Germany, with the single plank of defence of democracy—if not the German Communists? Who built and fought for the Popular Front in France, and for its extension into an all-national “French Front” against the enemies of popular liberty and friends of Hitler—if not the French Communists? Who welcomed and supported, in all countries, the cause of the Chinese people, making in its resistance to Hitler’s Japanese ally the first strides towards the “illusions” of bourgeois democracy—if not the Communists of the whole world, who recognised the immense historical progress represented by such steps? Who were in the vanguard of the Spanish people’s organised fight for a democratic republic against the foreign Fascist invader—if not the Communists of Spain? Who carried on the fiercest fight in this country for a people’s front against the accomplice and patrol of the German-Italian aggressors—the Chamberlain Government—and who shed their blood in the front ranks of the International Brigade—if not the Communists of Great Britain?

It is just because the Communists know the value and historical role of bourgeois democracy that they have shown themselves capable of fighting and dying for bourgeois-democratic revolutions. It is just because they understand its limitations “in the ordinary peaceful course of events” that they expose the lying swindle implied in the suggestion that an imperialist war can be carried on by a great imperialist state in the interests of democracy; and call the people in the name of self-preservation and of the future, to struggle for a higher, infinitely more powerful, and therefore certainly victorious democracy in Britain.

India To-day

BY R. PAGE ARNOT

THE VICEROY, on August 8th, once more offered to sell a pig in a poke to the people of India. There were no buyers. The Indian National Congress, which, at the 1937 elections, despite the restricted electorate and heavily-rigged arrangements for privileged constituencies, nevertheless obtained an overwhelming majority, is not so easily to be duped. Indeed, the British Government, which authorised the Viceroy to make his statement, can hardly have expected to get from India any response, apart from the ready applause of its own clients and confidants. Nor can they have been altogether surprised when the Muslim president of the Indian National Congress, Manlana Kalam Asad, coldly declined to enter the game. From the impudent opening claim that "India's anxiety at this moment of critical importance in the world struggle against tyranny and aggression to contribute to the full to the common cause and to the triumph of our common ideas is manifest", to the flowery statement of "the intentions of His Majesty's Government", the device was altogether too transparent. These intentions turn out to be a reiteration of the "full weight" which British Imperialism will lend to any minority to thwart the decisions of the majority of the Indian people; the "revision" (which may mean on the precedent of the Simon Commission, either extension or restriction) of the present "constitution" by some third and presumably hand-picked Round Table—provided always that safeguards are maintained for and by the British Imperialists; and that in any case this must all be put off till after the war. Negatively, this means the rejection of the Congress demands for unequivocal recognition of national independence, for self-determination, for the future of India to be decided by a democratically elected Constituent Assembly, and for immediate setting up of a National Government with ministers responsible to elected bodies. The Indian National Congress in the last ten months had asked the British Government to define its intentions towards India: in order that the Indians might judge of the claim that this war was being waged for democracy and freedom. Through the mouth of the Viceroy the reply is hereby given and the Congress leaders are now invited to behave like their predecessors in the war of 1914–18, in return for which they are informed that the principle of "divide and rule" will continue to be operated, that they had better drop their present programme, and that they would do well to accept a post-dated cheque for a new constitutional scheme, "after the war."

In these circumstances, the reason for the Viceroy's statement, followed by the parliamentary debate of August 15th, must be looked upon as the preparation of public opinion at home and in the U.S.A. for the further steps the Government will take to deal with the Congress and the whole liberation movement of the Indian people. Already there have been many arrests, especially of leaders of the Indian working class: and new repressive ordinances (e.g. against defence volunteers) have been issued. Moreover, as Jawaharlal Nehru stated in a recent telegram, the closing of the Burma Road to China (with other steps for the appeasement of Japanese Imperialism),

is directly opposed to the interests of the Indian people, who have expressed their solidarity with the people of China. Talk of "common ideals" cannot hide this conflict of interests; and in it there lies a threat for the future. But British public opinion, as voiced in the press, as well as the debate in Parliament, appeared to accept without question the Government statements. The press telegrams to India will say that there is "unanimity" behind the Government and the possibility of friendship between the peoples of Britain and India that could develop from an acceptance of the Congress programme will be made more remote. This is a prospect full of peril for the people of this country: and the sooner there is an awakening to this danger and a widespread understanding of India to-day, the sooner the working class and the people of this country will be in a position to solve their own problems.

Precisely at this time the publication of R. Palme Dutt's book on India gives everyone the opportunity of acquiring a full understanding, a criterion by which to judge vice-regal statements and an equipment for participating in the struggle for Colonial liberation, as part of the real "common cause" of the working class and the oppressed peoples against Imperialism.

India To-day is the most important book about it since the time the peoples of India first became subject to the domination of the British capitalists.

It is the best book written in this country on the Colonial Question. It is a profound Marxist study that lays bare the working of Imperialism.

So far, its reception at the hands of reviewers in the Capitalist press has been in inverse proportion to its importance. Handed out to the readers of the Left Book Club on a pair of tongs by Professor Laski, the ideologist of the Labour Party Executive Committee (odd resemblance between the churchmen who "edited" Gibbon to minimise the damage his history might do to their altars and Laski's careful attempt at "decontamination" in the Left News) it has since—apart from one or two hostile notices—received scarcely a single serious review. Under the circumstances of the present war, threatening to involve the whole of mankind, it is noteworthy that the best Marxist work in Western Europe for many a year should be met by a conspiracy of silence. All the more then the working class of the English-speaking countries should make up their minds to get this book and equip themselves from it.

The book falls into five main parts, together with a preliminary chapter on India in the War and a sixth part drawing conclusions as to the future. In Part I, *India as it Is and as it Might Be*, there is presented the problem of India, the 370,000,000 human beings, living in extreme poverty, under a foreign rule which maintains by force the social system, and struggling for the means of life, for elementary freedom. The facts are those admitted by Imperialists that "after two centuries of imperialist rule, India presents a spectacle of squalid poverty and misery of the mass of the people without equal in the world". Nor is it deficiency of resources that explains this; nor long-lasting historic backwardness (for up till the British capitalists came, India was relatively advanced in the world scale of technical development); nor any other specious reason. Citations from imperialist apologists themselves lead to the conclusion that "it is this failure to develop the productive resources of India that finally sounds the death-knell of imperialism in India to-day"; and the necessary transformation, depending on the national movement, on the working masses and

especially on the young working class, while having as its first objective the liberation from Imperialism, has then the further issue of the ending of poverty. Before this can be set forth in full, there are necessary sections dealing with the "Silent censorship" over India and the mythologies ("White Man's burden" in all keys) conjured up by the imperialists and spread by them in this country through every agency of propaganda. In Chapter 3 the terrible paradox of the wealth of India and the poverty of India is followed by a complete exposure of the over-population fallacies, the fantastic nonsense solemnly put forward about the "devastating torrent of Indian babies" in a country whose population increase lags behind Britain. In Chapter 4 there is squarely given the contrast between two worlds, socialism in the U.S.S.R. and imperialism in India over two decades, together with a particular contrast of the Central Asian Republics, where almost everything in the past conditions under the Tsar's viceroy was strictly comparable with Hindustan a few hundred miles to the south, and where their present position gives a glimpse of India as it might be.

The need of this first part may be illustrated by the British reader from his own experience. To every school-child the story of the "Black Hole of Calcutta" as the origin and justification of British rule in India, is nearly as familiar as the Norman Conquest, while it is not one in ten thousand who would know of the Moplah death train of 1921. But the "Black Hole" never occurred. It is a myth, an invented war-atrocity, a lie which does not take on any aspect of truth by its repetition for over a century and half or by being taught to little children.

The atrocious suffocation of the Moplah prisoners of British imperialism, on the other hand, is something that did take place, and less than 20 years ago: but it finds no mention in the school-books. Even when Holwell's monument commemorating the imaginary "Black Hole" was removed two months ago by the Bengal Government from a main thoroughfare of Calcutta because it "offended the susceptibilities" of the inhabitants, *The Times* left it to be inferred that the people of Bengal were unduly sensitive about an episode in their own history and no hint was given that British rule in India came with a lie, or that it was the British who should have felt shame.

In Part II, *British Rule in India*, an historical analysis reveals the secret of Indian poverty; and therewith discusses the reason for the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century primacy of British capitalism and the course of ruling class politics. An examination of the fertile thoughts of Marx on India is followed by a statement of the stages of exploitation from the policy of plunder under John Company to the exploitation of a market for goods with the industrial devastation of Hindustan and from that to the present stage of finance capital, whose stranglehold is expressed in constitutional form in the Government of India Act of 1935. A hundred facts refute the "industrialisation" fallacy. The argument goes deep and the reader may understand from it not only the complex that is India-England but the whole question of imperialism and the subject peoples, can see wider horizons and come to grasp the last century and a half of world history. *British Rule in India* confirms the Communist International thesis on the National and Colonial question.

Of particular importance for the British reader is the exposition in Part III of the *Basic Problem of India—the Agrarian Problem*. Here is not only a clear statement of the process of growing agrarian crisis: the over-pressure of the

population on agriculture, due to the continuing “de-industrialisation” of the Indian colony; the stagnation and deterioration of agriculture; the land-hunger of the peasantry, with dwarfish, fragmented and ever-smaller holdings; the whole falling more and more into the maw of absentee landlords; the crushing burden of debt; the expropriation of the peasantry. These developments which have gone on with the remorseless movement of a natural process, which the imperialist rulers of India cannot end without ending their own rule, are now shown to have increased their speed in recent years. Twenty years ago the landless peasants were reckoned at one-fifth of the whole: to-day *at one-half*. Out of this abyss there is no rescue save in the shape of Agrarian Revolution; and Chapter 9 (“The Burdens on the Peasantry”) in its closing sentences sounds the prelude to Agrarian Revolution:

“Carlyle described the situation of the French peasantry on the eve of the Great Revolution in a famous passage:

The widow is gathering nettles for her children’s dinner: a perfumed seigneur, delicately lunging in the *Oeil de Bœuf*, has an alchemy whereby he will extract from her the third nettle, and name it Rent and Law.

A more mysterious alchemy has been achieved to-day in British India. “One nettle is left for the peasant; two nettles are gathered for the seigneur.”

Parts II and III, showing the two axes of change in India, the national struggle for liberation from British rule and the oncoming of Agrarian Revolution, give the basis for Part IV, *The Indian People in Movement* (the rise of Indian Nationalism, the three stages of national struggle, and the rise of Labour and Socialism) and Part V, *The Battleground in India To-day*. To discuss these two parts together with the conclusions in Part VI would require a full treatment in relation to the new developments in India, and the present world situation. Enough has been said to indicate the scope of “India To-day”, which becomes the indispensable equipment of every revolutionary. For no one who sees the need of a social transformation can afford to neglect the study of this book or fail to gain from its passion of revolutionary thought an understanding and a stimulus for action.

We have in the office a small number of the popular LABOUR MONTHLY pamphlet: “Engels and Science”, by J. D. Bernal, which are for disposal to the first comers at the price of 2*d.* each (3*d.* post free).

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One Year of War Economy

BY JOHN KNIGHT

WHAT IS THE outcome of one year of war in the economic sphere? How have conditions changed in recent months? Where is the weakest spot? On what point do we have to focus our attention? Probably the most important sector of the economic front is the financial one. When there are economic difficulties of a major nature, a capitalist government pursues one of two financial policies: a deflationary or an inflationary one. For the present, the Government has decided for inflation.

Let us look at Budget policy first. The following table shows how, according to the three war Budgets presented up to now, the Government has decided to finance the war.

Budget	THREE BUDGETS, 1939 AND 1940		
	Total expenses (in million £'s)	Tax Revenue	Percentage to be Covered by Loans
September, 1939	1,933	995	49%
April, 1940	2,667	1,234	54%
July, 1940	3,467	1,360	61%

The percentage of total expenditure to be covered by loans has increased from slightly less than half to over three fifths. Covering expenditure by loans does not invariably lead to inflation. If loans are voluntary, interest-bearing tax payments, then they do not need to influence financial and economic conditions in a way which would lead to a rise in prices and general inflation. But if there is reluctance to subscribe to loans, if the Government has to "prepare the market" for loans by pumping money on the market, then loans must lead to inflation.

There can be little doubt that there is great reluctance among capitalists to lend money to the Government for any length of time. Only one long-term loan amounting to but £300 million has been issued, and the subscription of this loan required high pressure propaganda. The Government has not risked, and there is no sign that it intends to risk, in the near future, the issue of a second long-term loan. Since the ruling class is intent upon an inflationary policy it is, of course, not ready to invest in loans which must depreciate in value, under inflation. Even the subscription of middle-term loans is so difficult to arrange that the City Editor of the *Evening Standard* (August 2, 1940) speaks quite openly of the "disappointment with the subscriptions to the issue of 2½ per cent War Bonds".

Since there is an obvious reluctance on the part of the ruling class to subscribe to loans because it intends to make the masses pay for the war through inflation, since, on the other hand, the Government needs money immediately and continuously, and since the ruling class is ready to lend money at short-term for "adequate profit" if the Government is liberal in giving credits and ready to pump money into the market, *the present financial policy of the Government is one which lays the foundations for a serious inflation.*

During the present financial year, that is, since April up to the end of July, the total deficit incurred amounts, according to official statistics, to £689 millions. During the same period the short-term debt, the floating debt of the Government, has increased from £1,477 to £1,806 millions or by about £330 million; to this must be added £30 millions deposit receipt loans of the banks which also are on very short terms, so that it can be said that more than half of the deficit incurred is covered by short-term loans. At the same time subscriptions to National Savings Certificates and 3 per cent Bonds have amounted to £136 millions. These subscriptions come chiefly from the lower middle class and from the savings of the workers. *If a serious inflation should come about, then these savings of the people will be lost in the same way as the savings of the masses of the people on the Continent were lost in the years following the last world war.*

The Government is out to finance the war by inflation, that is, by robbing the people through higher prices which force them to restrict consumption more and more. *In order to further this process of restricting consumption the Government has increased a number of taxes on mass consumption goods, especially on tobacco and beer, and has introduced the general purchase tax. These taxes are not levied to "finance the war effort" because the revenue from these taxes is small compared with war expenditure.* If there had been no new taxes introduced since the first war budget, the percentage of expenditure to be covered by loans would be about 67 instead of 61, not a very great difference.

These taxes are levied in order to restrict consumption before inflation becomes really effective. When will that be? If we look at the circulation of money we find a considerable increase in recent months. The note circulation amounted to about £520 millions before the war; in the beginning of April it reached only a slightly higher level, £540 millions; since then, however, it rose rather rapidly to about £615 millions in the first week of August. This rise in the note circulation would not have any inflationary influence if production had risen by about the same amount. Unfortunately, no production data are available. But if production had kept pace with the rise in note circulation prices would have remained stable. Has that been the case?

PRICES AUGUST 1939 TO JULY 1940

<i>Year and Month</i>	<i>Wholesale Prices</i>	<i>Cost of Living</i> (1929 equals 100)
1939 August	76	95
September	83	101
October	90	103
November	94	106
December	100	106
1940 January	100	108
February	100	109
March	101	109
April	101	110
May	104	111
June	108	114
July	110 (preliminary figures)	

The rise in prices during the early months of the war was chiefly due to an increase in prices of imported goods because of the depreciation of the value

of the £, to "pure and simple" profiteering, and to price-rises controlled and effected by the Government for the purpose of diminishing consumption. From the end of 1939, up to April 1940, prices remained comparatively stable. Since then, however, prices have started to rise again, concurrently with an increase in the note circulation and with a rapid increase of Government expenditure. *It is very probable that the rise of prices which we have observed in recent weeks and months is due, in large part, to the inflationary policy of the Government.*

While we can discern the beginnings of inflation, one must not over-estimate the effects of this inflationary movement during the next few months. Inflation always develops slowly, it even may stop completely for some weeks, and only in its later stages is it felt as a burden which increases from week to week and, finally, from day to day.

The Government policy of guns instead of butter, or (to use the terms of the City columns) of restricting the production and consumption of goods not of importance in the war effort and of concentrating raw materials, shipping space, and labour power upon the provision of war materials, finds interesting expression in the official unemployment statistics. In a number of industries producing goods which to a considerable part are destined for civilian consumption the number of unemployed has increased—and that in spite of the fact that in most of them a considerable part of the younger generation has been mobilised. If unemployment in an industry usually employing 500,000 men has increased from 30,000 to 50,000, while at the same time 50,000 men have been called up, then the labour force has not declined, as the unemployment figures would indicate, by 20,000 but by 70,000 or three and a half times as much. This must be kept in mind if we look at the following figures:

INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED IN JULY
OVER JUNE 1940

Coal mining	25,900
Tailoring	9,100
Dressmaking, millinery	8,100
Footwear	5,400
Hosiery	4,900
Cotton	3,200
Furniture, upholstery	3,100
Shirts, collars, underwear	2,700
Carpets	2,500
Leather tanning, dressing	2,500

The increase of unemployment among miners is due to the falling off of exports to France. In all other industries the cause is the restriction of production in consumption goods industries, a restriction which has progressed more quickly than the expansion of the war industries. It is probable that, in the months to come, this restrictive policy will be pursued even more energetically, while on the other hand it is not probable that unemployment will rise very much since the workers dismissed from consumption goods industries will be employed in industries producing war materials.

This does not mean that the fall in exports and the decrease in mass purchasing power through price rises and declining real wages and real salaries may not outstrip, from time to time, the capacity of the war industries to absorb the workers dismissed in consumption goods industries. But the

important thing which the figures show is *the energetic way in which the Government pursues its policy of cutting down the standard of living of the people. However wages may rise, however employment conditions may improve—the Government is doing everything in its power to decrease the quantity of goods which wages can buy.*

Unfortunately, no data on the production of consumption goods are published. But there are some other statistics which give some indication of the rapid decline in the general standard of living which the Government has effected. According to the statistics on retail trade sales, published by the Board of Trade, the value of sales has developed as follows:

Month	Value of Retail Sales	
	1939	1940
April	100	102·3
May	100	104·5
June	100	102·0

If we use the official cost of living index as measure of the increase of retail prices and then compute the quantity of goods sold retail we arrive at the following figures:

STANDARD OF LIVING OF THE PEOPLE		
(The corresponding month in 1939 equals 100)		
Month	Standard of Living	
	1939	1940
April	100	87
May	100	88
June	100	86

According to these figures the standard of living of the people has declined as compared with a year ago, by 12 to 14 per cent. If we keep in mind, however, that the official cost of living index does not accurately measure the price increase and that, in recent weeks, conditions have deteriorated further, we can say that to-day the standard of living of the British people is about 20 per cent, or one-fifth, lower than before the outbreak of the war. *A decrease of the standard of living by 20 per cent while the number of unemployed amounts to over 800,000 and Labour leaders hold responsible Government offices! Really British imperialism may well be satisfied with developments on the economic front.*

The effects of the rise in prices (due partly to the depreciation of the £, partly to managed price-rises through Government price fixing, partly to pure and simple profiteering and, finally, in recent weeks to inflationary tendencies) upon the earning power of the workers, becomes obvious from the following table:

<i>Period</i>	<i>Wage Rates</i>	<i>Cost of Living</i>	<i>Real Wage Rates</i>
	<i>Second Quarter 1939 equal 100</i>		
July/Sept. 1939	100	100	100
Oct./Dec. 1939	102	108	94
Jan./March 1940	105	112	94
April/June 1940	106	115	92

Real wage rates have declined by about 8 per cent according to official statistics of wages and cost of living. That is, if a worker in the months before the war worked 44 hours per week the employer can exploit him to-day

for 48 hours without paying him any more as measured by his purchasing power. Actually prices have increased more than the official index indicates. It is very probable that prices have been driven up so much that an employer can exploit his workers 50 hours per week in June, 1940, for the same real wage that he paid for 44 hours in July, 1939. Since June prices have increased again, and it may be estimated that to-day *the employer has to pay for the nine-hour day no more* (as measured in purchasing power) *than he did a year ago for the eight-hour day. Every worker in Britain works to-day one hour daily without pay. And this seems to be only the beginning. Everything indicates that conditions will deteriorate further in the near future.*

While it is true that the ruling class is preparing for inflation as a means of financing the war at the expense of the masses of the people, there are other financial movements which are not pleasing at all to the ruling class in this country. Chief among them is the development of foreign trade. The import surplus, that is the amount by which imports exceed exports, has developed as follows:

IMPORT SURPLUS, 1939 AND 1940		
<i>Period</i>		<i>£'s million</i>
1938		387·2
1939 January/August	256·1	
September/December	145·1	
Total year		401·2
1940 January/June		343·4

The excess of imports over exports has increased very rapidly. In fact, it has almost doubled. Excess of imports over exports means that the ruling class has to pay either in gold or in foreign investments for a large part of the imported goods. *Every month which passes thus weakens the financial hold of British imperialism overseas.* At the same time oversea countries begin to free themselves from the hold British imperialism has over them; this is true especially of the South-American countries; and it is true also of "native" white capitalists in the British Dominions.

While British imperialism has to pay dearly for imports it has not succeeded in increasing the amount of goods imported. True, the value of imports has risen by about a quarter since June–August 1939. But the quantity of goods imported has declined not inconsiderably. The following table gives a very rough computation of the quantities of British foreign trade:

BRITISH FOREIGN TRADE, 1939 AND 1940 (June–August 1939 equals 100)		
<i>Period</i>	<i>Imports</i>	<i>Exports</i>
June/August 1939	100	100
September/December 1939	74	73
January/March 1940	96	85
April/June 1940	90	89

British imports have never reached the pre-war level, and in June of this year they declined almost to the level of the first war months, when complete disorganisation drove imports down rapidly. The June index figure is about 80, that is about 20 per cent below the pre-war level. *Exports have developed even more unfavourably than imports, and the June export index figure is about 75.*

Looking at the above figures, it is astonishing that the excess value of imports has increased so very much; true, exports have declined somewhat more than imports, but the difference is not very great. The decisive factor, however, which drove up the excess value of imports over exports so much cannot be discerned in the above table. The great excess of the value of imports over exports is due to the fact that import prices have risen much more rapidly than export prices, very probably about 50 per cent more. *Britain has to pay much more highly for the goods she imports than Britain's customers for the goods which they buy from Britain.*

We must realise that the above figures do not yet include any large amounts of armament goods sent from the United States. As soon as they arrive in large quantities an even more unfavourable development is to be expected, with a considerable transfer of financial overseas strongholds of British imperialism to the ruling class in the United States—a transaction which easily explains their “willingness to help British to the utmost”.

This survey of the economic front brings us to the following main conclusions:

The weakest point in the armour of the ruling class and at the same time its chief weapon against the masses of the people is “finance”. *While, on the one hand, the ruling class employs an inflationary policy to rob the masses, it experiences, on the other hand, a constant weakening of its finance-capitalist hold all over the world, a weakening which is accompanied by the growing strength of its chief imperialist rival, the United States of America.* There are many other factors of importance to be observed on the economic front, but almost all of them are related to these two: there is the accelerated decline in the purchasing power of the masses of the people, there is a temporary growth of unemployment in certain trades, there is the unfavourable development of foreign trade conditions, and so on. They are all connected with financial problems and difficulties, and at the present moment—though the situation may change again—we must focus our attention upon finance if we want to understand the policy of the ruling class.

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Blockading the People's Pantry

BY ROSE SMITH

BRITAIN IS ENGAGED in a war of blockade. The British Minister for Agriculture stated, on July 11, that

tens of millions of people on the continent of Europe will soon face the danger of starvation. Many millions may well perish.

The introduction of rationing in Britain, the scarcity of supplies of certain necessary foodstuffs and the more recent Nazi attempts to blockade food convoys coming into British ports cause many Britons to seriously question whether there is likely to be a real scarcity of foodstuffs in this country. The Minister for Agriculture has attempted to reassure the British public by declaring, on July 11, that

British agriculture with modern methods, modern machinery, modern science and the necessary labour and drive can and will play a large part in saving the people of this island from a similar fate.

The Minister of Food, Lord Woolton, gave an assurance in the House of Lords, on July 19, that there is plenty of food in the country to face a long siege, should a siege ever come. But the Ministers themselves create doubts as to the guarantee of adequate supplies of foodstuffs when, for example, the Minister of Food announces, "I want the women to consider how to do without things," declares that the people will have to begin to live harder, and that

we cannot afford the luxurious standard of living this country has enjoyed and still import the things essential for standing, if need be, a state of siege.

Sir Kingsley Wood, Chancellor of the Exchequer, is not encouraging when he states

it is only a reduction in consumption expenditure which serves the only purpose of sound finance, namely to keep down prices.

For when the Minister speaks of consumption expenditure he cannot possibly be unmindful of that large portion of the community, the families with less than £5 a week income, who are responsible for two-thirds of the nation's consumption and who, in normal times, live far from luxuriously. He spoke with authority when he declared on August 6

a great deal has been done by the Board of Trade to restrict unnecessary production for the home civilian market. Many orders have been made limiting the amount of goods—covering already a wide range—that can be supplied by manufacturers and wholesalers. The object of these restrictions is twofold—first, to help the diversion of our production resources to war purposes, and second, to maintain, as far as possible, our production for export.

Sir Kingsley Wood thus opens the way to accusations of blockading the pantries of the British consumers.

The P.E.P. bulletin issued as long ago as January 16, argued along the same lines.

War eats up such quantities of materials and of man-hours of work that no nation can expect to meet its demands entirely out of idle resources, or even by working harder. There must be cutting down of unnecessary consumption in order to make available for winning the war the amount of resources whose transfer is compatible with the efficiency and morale of the nation.

And again :

All must recognise, it stated, that the more quickly they find themselves without many of the things they have been used to, the more rapid and more certain will an Allied victory be. In war, there is only one class of people whose every demand British industry must strive to satisfy without question, and that class is not composed of Britons, but of Americans, Swedes, Swiss, Argentinians, and anyone else outside the belligerent ranks who can pay in foreign exchange. That is a hard truth which the home consumer must face.

Clearly if the estimate of Mr. Pethick Lawrence, as stated in the House of Commons on August 6 during the debate on the Finance Bill, was anything near the mark, the war can only be maintained at the expense of the British working classes. For he then declared that if the war continued until 1943 Britain will be spending five-sixths of the national income on war alone.

Meanwhile, the actual figures issued by the Board of Trade indicate the process already in operation. The Board's returns show that retail daily sales dropped from 115 in the month of May to 105 in the month of June, taking the daily sales of 1937 as 100.

The actual effects of existing economy on the workers can be judged from the fact that the meat ration is the one most frequently not taken up. This is in spite of the fact that the amount of meat obtainable for 1*s.* 10*d.* reduces meat consumption to the standard of the poorest strata of society, on the 1934 income basis, as estimated by Sir John Boyd Orr. The situation in regard to butter, only one in three being able to afford the rationed quantity, is also an indication of the low standard of life of a large section of the community.

The National Milk Scheme has been a further revelation of the poverty of the people under war-time conditions. For with only about one-half of the people calculated as potential recipients under the scheme registered, already nearly half a million have been able to prove to Government representatives that with the most rigorous application of the Means Test, they are eligible for free milk supplies. The very fact that the Government found it necessary to institute a cheap and free milk scheme for nursing and expectant mothers and for children below school age is evidence of its own recognition of the low standard of living to which millions of British workers are being driven. The Board of Education's latest circular on the "Provision of Meals and Milk for school children in war-time" is yet another example of the critical situation in regard to essential foodstuffs. The circular argues

The maintenance of the nutrition of school children is at all times a matter of vital national importance.

It adds significantly

but in time of war it is specially important to safeguard the health of the rising generation by ensuring that they receive adequate quantities of nutritive food.

In regard to the existing provisions for the supply of meals, the circular states:

it is clear that the provision which was insufficient before the war, is now even less adequate.

For the first time on record the Board admits, in the circular, that malnutrition "is usually associated with poverty", and urges that

any symptoms, however slight, may be regarded as justifying free provision for necessitous children and that these symptoms may be either educational or physical. It is not necessary that definite physical signs of malnutrition should be evident, and children may be selected as in need of feeding on the strength of recommendations by teachers or others who are in regular contact with them from day to day.

The Government's cost of living figures reveal some of the reasons for the urgent need to supplement the food of the children by meals in school. They record that, by June, prices had risen 20 per cent since the outbreak of war. The *Economist*, July 20, admitted:

This index is a very poor reflection of living habits to-day, and the rise may have in fact been more than a fifth. For poor people buying in small quantities it certainly has been. In June, though the whole index only rose $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, the index of food prices rose 6 per cent. Potatoes, milk, and eggs had gone up and since then the pressure on food prices has grown. Eggs are scarce and, in the new situation at sea, imported foodstuffs, though not likely to be really short, are sure to become less plentiful.

The perspective is one of still higher prices, and restriction of supplies. Mr. Boothby, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Food, made this clear in a statement in the House of Commons on July 18, when he said that higher costs of production will mean higher prices for home produced foods such as milk, eggs, potatoes and meat. The *Economist*, nine days later, endorsed this prediction of a further rise in the price of foodstuff as a result of the curtailment of imports.

To really envisage what this blockade of the people's pantries means, it should be borne in mind that, two years prior to the outbreak of war, the nutrition reports had already stated that half the population of the country was underfed and subsisting on inadequate diets. But it is equally necessary to grasp the implication of the war situation as it affects those who are most insistent in the demand for sacrifices in order to feed the war machine and guarantee the future of British trade interests.

Consider the effects of the Excess Profits Tax on those firms directly concerned with the foodstuffs industry. It is a farce to pretend that their dividends are limited by the 100 per cent Excess Profits Tax; increased dividends are being paid and will continue to be paid for many months out of their last year's turnover. Thus the International Tea Company's Stores was able to present a very rosy situation to its shareholders on August 6 when the chairman announced an increased trading profit of £107,000, which he described as

largely due to the intelligent anticipation on the part of the Board, some months before the outbreak of war, of war-time trading conditions.

This company, which had 50 depots in July, 1932, has now 65 depots. Its stock has been increased by over £500,000, and at present, stands at nearly £2,500,000. Other recent profits of food combines include Smith's Potato

Crisps, £248,055, with a 32½% dividend; Cerebos Salt with £113,516, and a 40% dividend. The nation-wide caterers, J. Lyons & Co., have come out very well during this period of "sacrifices" with £1,011,452 profit and a dividend of 20%. Van den Bergh, of margarine fame, recently declared a 12½% dividend on £1,527,622 profit.

Tobacco, on which the workers will be mainly responsible for the raising of £9,000,000 taxation, has been pouring huge sums of money into the coffers of its rich shareholders, with the Imperial Tobacco Company's profit of £10,230,150 and a tax-free dividend of 23 per cent. Beer too, for which the workers will have to provide £13,000,000 in taxation in a year, has given goodly returns to companies like Charringtons who, for their last financial year, recorded a 16 per cent dividend on a profit of £660,323. Ranks', the millers, latest dividend is 18 per cent on a profit of £627,130, whilst the manufacturers of Glaxo were recently able to hand out £88,510, representing a 10 per cent dividend plus 150 per cent share bonus.

And whilst the Minister of Food, Lord Woolton, states that "We cannot afford the luxurious standard of living this country has enjoyed", his Department creates scandals in regard to the margins of profit allowed by vested interests in food.

The Select Committee on Government Expenditure, 1940, in its fourth report, passes critical judgment on the way the Ministry works in relation to the margin of profits allowed to food trade interests. The Ministry, states the report, has declared its aim is

... to organise the distribution of each commodity so as to interfere as little as possible with the normal channels of trade. This involves a large amount of consultation with Trade interests ...

It points out that a large amount of time is spent in bargaining about the margin of profit to be allowed to these trade interests "at a time when their full energies are required for constructive planning". Its methods are stated to tend to "create suspicions that powerful trade interests or skilful and hard bargainers are likely to obtain more concessions than others". The report expresses apprehension that the settlements may be "on a basis of rough and ready compromise between various interests and not on the basis of a plan scientifically devised in the interests of the country as a whole."

We feel bound to record the impression, states the Select Committee, that in some cases the Trade Directors, by virtue of their special knowledge and personality, may have a strong influence.

In at least one case an important "Trade" official has been, simultaneously with performing his official duties in the Ministry, engaged as a Trade representative in negotiating with the Ministry as regards the operating margin to be allowed to his own trade.

This is surely sufficiently serious criticism to merit action to wipe out an evil which is imperilling the food supplies of the community. For the Ministry of Food has virtual monopoly powers which allow it sufficient control of the food trades and, provided it had the desire, it could rapidly nationalise the industry.

Meanwhile the Minister of Food places on record his very limited estimation of what constitutes necessities of life for the common people. He recently announced that the egg is not an essential article of diet. His scientific adviser, Professor D. C. Drummond, backs him up in a public statement to

the effect that physiologically people can do without fats. Parliamentary Under-secretary Boothby, doubtless, likewise spoke with his master's voice when he stated that scientists say that meat has no great nutritional value. But Mr. Boothby momentarily forgot his piece when he somewhat jocularly described his condition after an Oslo meal—full to the brim of vitamins, that did not prevent his having a very disturbed night.

It will be recalled that the somewhat rotund Mr. Boothby confessed that whilst he might get all the vitamins his system required from a diet of milk, raw vegetables, potatoes, cheese and wholemeal bread, he would undoubtedly be most unhappy, and, what was worse, extremely cross if he was kept to that diet. But that was only the Parliamentary Secretary's little joke, and not intended as a warning to the masses.

Meanwhile his chief, Lord Woolton, continues to keep his scientific advisers busy working out an iron ration diet for the toiling workers, as indicated in the Food Production Planning scheme announced a few months ago. As Professor J. B. S. Haldane, writing in the *Daily Worker* (August 8), points out in relation to the proposed vitaminised bread—

We must, however, be very careful that the improvement in our bread is not used as an excuse to cut down our rations of meat and other foods. Of the ten or so vitamins known, only three are being added to our food, namely B1 to bread, and A and D to margarine. We should certainly run short of some of the others on a bread and margarine diet.

Under the guise of a guaranteed minimum standard of life for the poorest there is evidence that the Government is pursuing a policy of switching everyone over onto an iron ration diet in conformity with its policy for restricting imports and reducing the expenditure of the individual workers.

Some special provisions for workers in war production are being discussed. Lord Woolton partook of a ninepenny luncheon arranged at Grosvenor House to demonstrate how cheap communal feeding can be in war-time. The Minister declared, at the luncheon, that living hard does not mean living grimly. He said that the luncheon

illustrates the principle that I want to see followed throughout the country—a simplicity of menu, an entire lack of wastage, and jolly company in which to eat the food.

He appealed to employers to open works canteens, promising to do all he could to assist those who responded to his call. Provision of communal feeding is an excellent principle provided that it ensures that all have adequate meals. But grave doubts creep in particularly since the aged, by the tens of thousands, are being refused Supplementary Pensions, and the plans for ensuring the barest minimum standard of life are being worked out, a minimum which the workers know from bitter experience usually becomes the maximum.

The opinions expressed by Sir Leonard Hall, Director of Physical Medicine, reiterated by statesmen and the Government's scientific advisers, does not conform with the British workers' standard of necessary foods. Sir Leonard Hall said,

Millions of Japanese live on rice, salad and a little fish, and, carrying out most efficient work at very little expense, compete most seriously in our foreign markets.

"Wholemeal bread, cheese and an onion," he claims, "have formed the staple

diet of workers in former days, and could do so again without any loss of vigour and health."

A group of research economists engaged in the study of war-time economic problems, in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* on June 22, claimed that they envisage that imports would be reduced to a bare minimum and that the food situation during and after next winter will be serious. Their proposals include a general rationing of all foodstuffs and the fixing of their prices. They also proposed that the sale of durable foodstuffs not immediately needed for consumption on the basis of the food plan be prohibited. This follows Lord Woolton's declaration (May 6):

I have already warned the public that I shall not hesitate to reduce any rations if I think it necessary for the preservation of supplies.

The restriction of meat and cattle food imports are but a minor example of the policy being pursued in order to keep down consumption by the people. The "ceiling" of the Government's expenditure on war materials has been by no means reached. Another budget seems inevitable before the end of the present financial year. It will go further towards restricting consumption by the masses, whilst we are being continually warned that the flow of imported foodstuffs—the life-line of the people—will be slowed down and reduced in volume.

At the same time it is agreed that high prices are being paid for foodstuffs for strategic reasons. The country is rapidly advancing towards the ration situation, whilst the Government's agricultural policy leads farmers to declare that they will restrict the potato acreage unless they are guaranteed bigger returns. In fact there is already talk of ploughing in a substantial proportion of this year's crop, in the way that fields of salad supplies have already been destroyed.

It is a scandal that, whilst tens of thousands of service men and civilians do not know the taste of green foodstuffs, Lancashire farmers, meeting a few days ago, could declare that thousands of dozens of lettuces in the southern part of the county had recently been chopped down for manure, and that they had thousands of cauliflowers and cabbages for which they could not find a market and, in addition, that owing to the high price of feeding stuffs, created by monopoly interests and heavy taxation, large stocks of poultry would have to be destroyed during the next few weeks, egg supplies being already almost on a famine basis for the same reason.

Virtual dictatorship in regard to local food supplies has already been established by the Government under the Emergency Powers Act. Without immediate steps by the workers to assume the right of control for the benefit of the majority, tens of thousands of British workers will suffer real privation during the coming months.

BOOK REVIEW

Science Hugs Its Chains

Science in War. A Penguin Special. 6d.

THIS BOOK contains the anonymous contributions of what we are told is "a group of distinguished scientists". It is not quite clear why they remain anonymous. Presumably they occupy official positions in the war machine and dare not risk giving an official *cachet* to their criticism of failure and obstruction in the application of science.

The essential burden of the charge made is a familiar one—that the present situation requires a more effective utilisation of scientific thought and scientific personnel. In the last war, a book with a similar object was published under the title of *Science and the Nation*, also containing individual contributions from leading scientists, though not anonymously. The book under review is less concerned with the benefits of science for the nation as a whole. Its case is simply that "the full use of our scientific resources is essential if we are to win the war", as the blurb on the cover has it.

The publisher's note declares even more pointedly that this is no time to praise the good that has been "achieved by the use of science in our war effort . . . this can come later when we have won the war."

Nevertheless, the chief interest of the book is not in its criticisms but in the useful account of new advances of science, which, although primarily achieved in response to war needs, are of permanent value to humanity as a whole.

In effect only four fields are touched upon, viz. (1) the conduct of war and treatment of wounds, (2) food, (3) welfare in war work, and (4) persuasion and propaganda.

By far the most complete and stimulating is the chapter on feeding the people. The chapter on propaganda, while saying some biting things about the elementary mistakes of the Government propaganda efforts, seems to be written by someone with curious views about labour, who can write: "in Britain, political power is shared mainly between two groups: the owners of money and industry . . . and the organised workers in the trade unions", who talks of the "masses" as "unconscious sophisticates of symbolism", and who insists that "there is necessarily a gulf between the leaders and the led", which should be filled by Duff-Snooperism, and propaganda.

But the most serious defect of the book is seen when we come to consider the "constructive criticism" offered.

The usual moan is uttered that science is not used enough and that the government and civil service contain practically no scientists. All this was a commonplace of the last war. But what is it that causes the difficulty, that stands in the way of the advancement of science?

Already, before the war, many leading scientists were arriving at a conclusion. There was a valuable collection of essays published on *The Frustration of Science*. There was the comprehensive work of J. D. Bernal on *The Social Function of Science*. The essence of these criticisms lay in their evidence that, in capitalist society, science was valued only (1) for purposes of money-making, and (2) for purposes of war. The root of the evil of the distortion and frustration of science was in the nature of capitalist society.

The failure of this book is its miserable evasion of this root question, its glorification of the limitation of science to destruction, and its pathetically timid conclusion that "the main sources of failure and obstruction" are to be found in the "almost total lack of a general approach to the problem of war organisation and war economy", that is to say in narrow-mindedness, instead of in the anarchy of capitalism.

These scientists assume and accept the dependence of science on capitalism. It is true that in their introduction they deplore the fact that the scientists appointed to advise the Government "seem to have been much more concerned with agreeing with the Government decisions than with challenging them in the name of science". They admonish the "yes men" of science whose character is indicated by a press report that "the Ministry of Poland has appointed a committee of eminent authorities to prove scientifically the validity of the policy that it has adopted".

Yet their own scientific outlook does not go beyond the horizon of the money power to which they are tied. For all their "constructive criticism", these distinguished authorities remain typical bourgeois scientists, of the same company as the lickspittles of capitalism whose height of ambi-

tion is to get recognition from a monopoly trust or to serve on a government committee.

The average worker could not be blamed if he thought science the worst enemy of mankind, since the increasing application of science has apparently led only to more horrible forms of war and destruction, and to the chaos and misery of our economic system, while the bulk of scientists complacently blind themselves to any waste of scientific effort if it is demanded by their master.

It is no use to answer by pointing to the benefits of scientific invention. Of course the needs of war, as well as of profit-making, help science forward. But science as a whole, and the scientists, remain in bondage. And as imperialism goes down in chaos and destruction, so will its henchmen in the world of science also, even with hymns to scientific progress on their lips.

However, even in this book, there are hints of a more basic criticism, although nowhere explicitly stated. And in actual fact the best elements among practising scientists

are more and more coming to realise from their own experience the hopelessness of the capitalist path, and that the way forward for science is by identification with the working class struggle.

Instead of the vague phrases about "effective organisation of scientific work" (p. 138) and the need to do away with "*laissez-faire* individualism and gentlemanly Civil Service Government" (p. 140) which conclude the book under review, the essential need, as many scientists already realise, is for a planned society not run on the basis of profits, and in which the outlook of science is not governed by the reactionary interests of an exploiting class.

Only from then, as Engels already stressed many years ago (*Dialectics of Nature*), "will date a new epoch of history, in which mankind itself and, with mankind all branches of its activity, and especially natural science, will experience an advance that will put everything preceding it in the deepest shade". This is the lesson which is already being taught by the Soviet Union.

CLEMENS DUTT

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